SARAI 3

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Any relation to persons living or dead is entirely coincidental.
Some aspects of the story contain adult themes and situations.
All content within the story is from the author's imagination and meant only for the futuristic storyline.

MASAHIRO SHIBATA
SARAI
3

IN THE NEAR FUTURE, MODERN CIVILIZATION IS DECLINING... OUR ONCE-GREAT CITIES ARE NOW JUST LEFTOVER HERITAGE AND MANKIND SINGLE-MINDEDLY CLINGS TO ITS OLD WYA OF LIVING.

EVEN WORSE, A STRAIN OF "ABNORMALITY GENES" HAS CUT THE HUMAN LIFESPAN DOWN TO NOTHING! HUMANS RARELY LIVE PAST THEIR 16TH YEAR--AND IF THEY DO, THE'RE SUBJECT TO HORRIBLE DISFIGURATION!

THE MUTATED GENES TURN HUMANS INTO MONSTERS, AND THIS GRISLY FATE HAS DRIVEN MANY PEOPLE TO THE DEPTHS OF DESPAIR.

TO PROTECT THE FUTURE OF MANKIND, A GUARD MAID NAMED SARAI SETS OUT ON HER LATEST JOB.

SARAI 3

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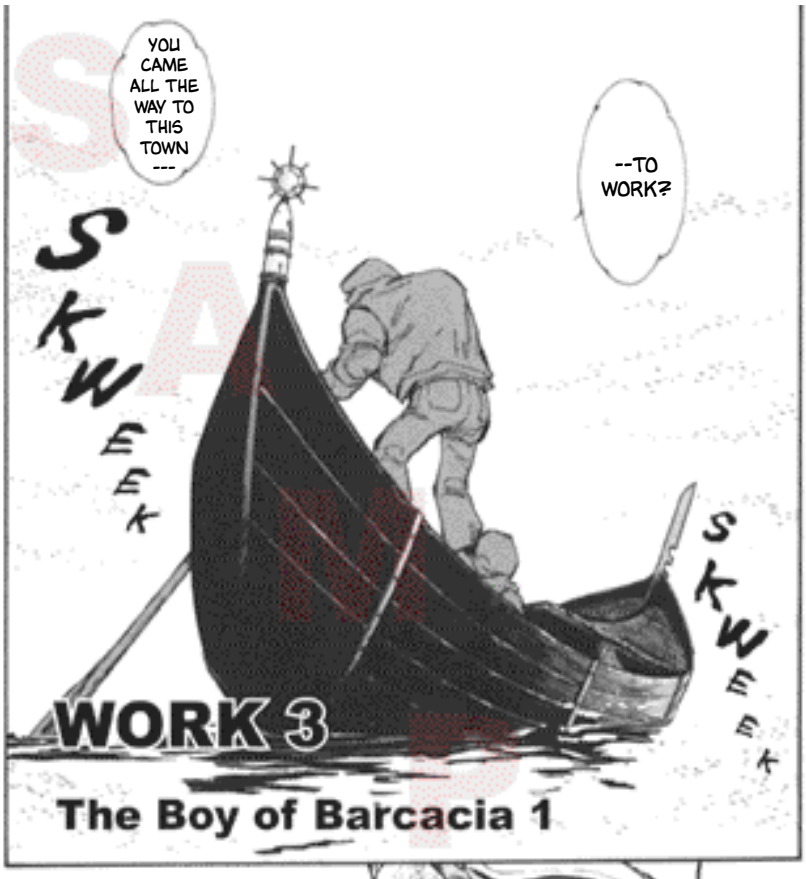
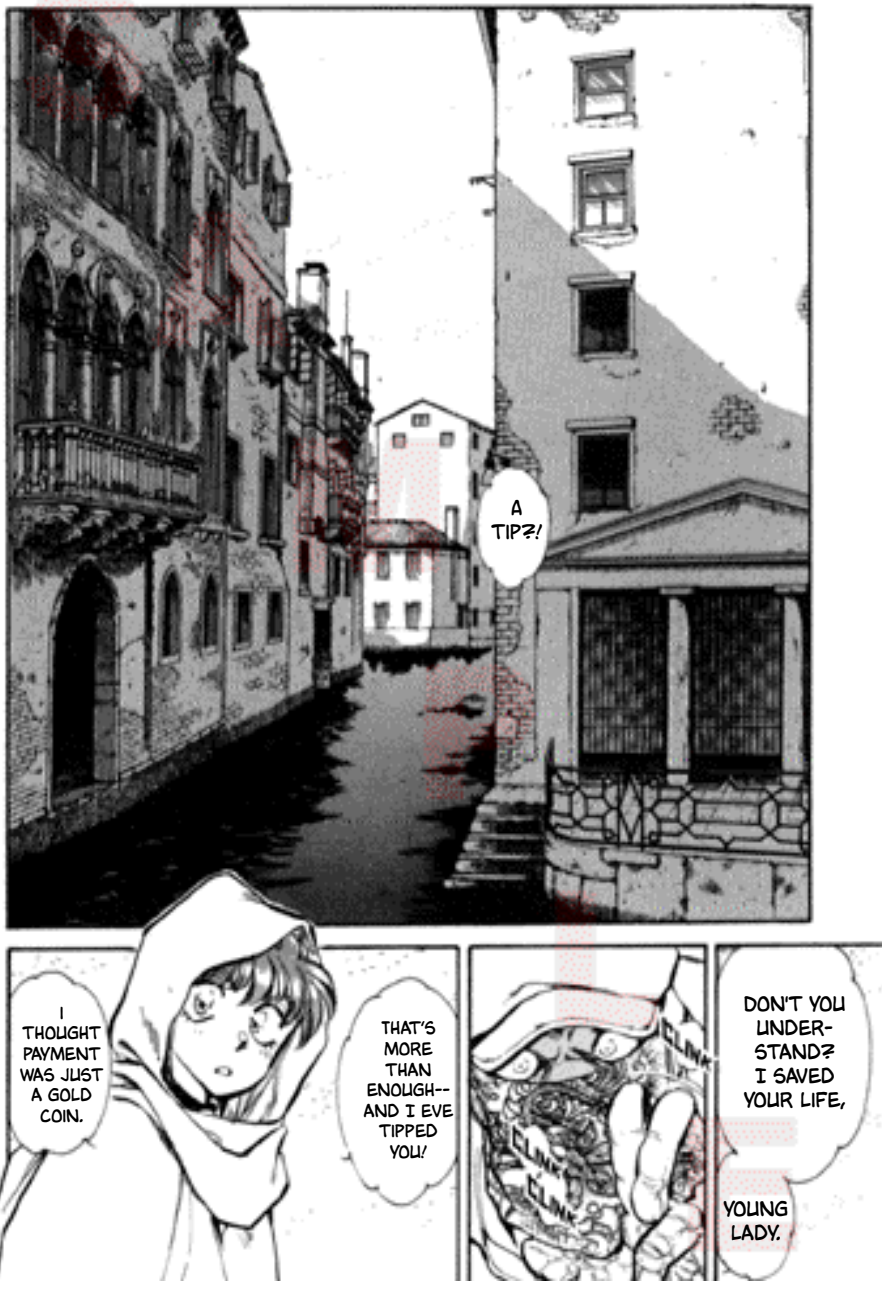
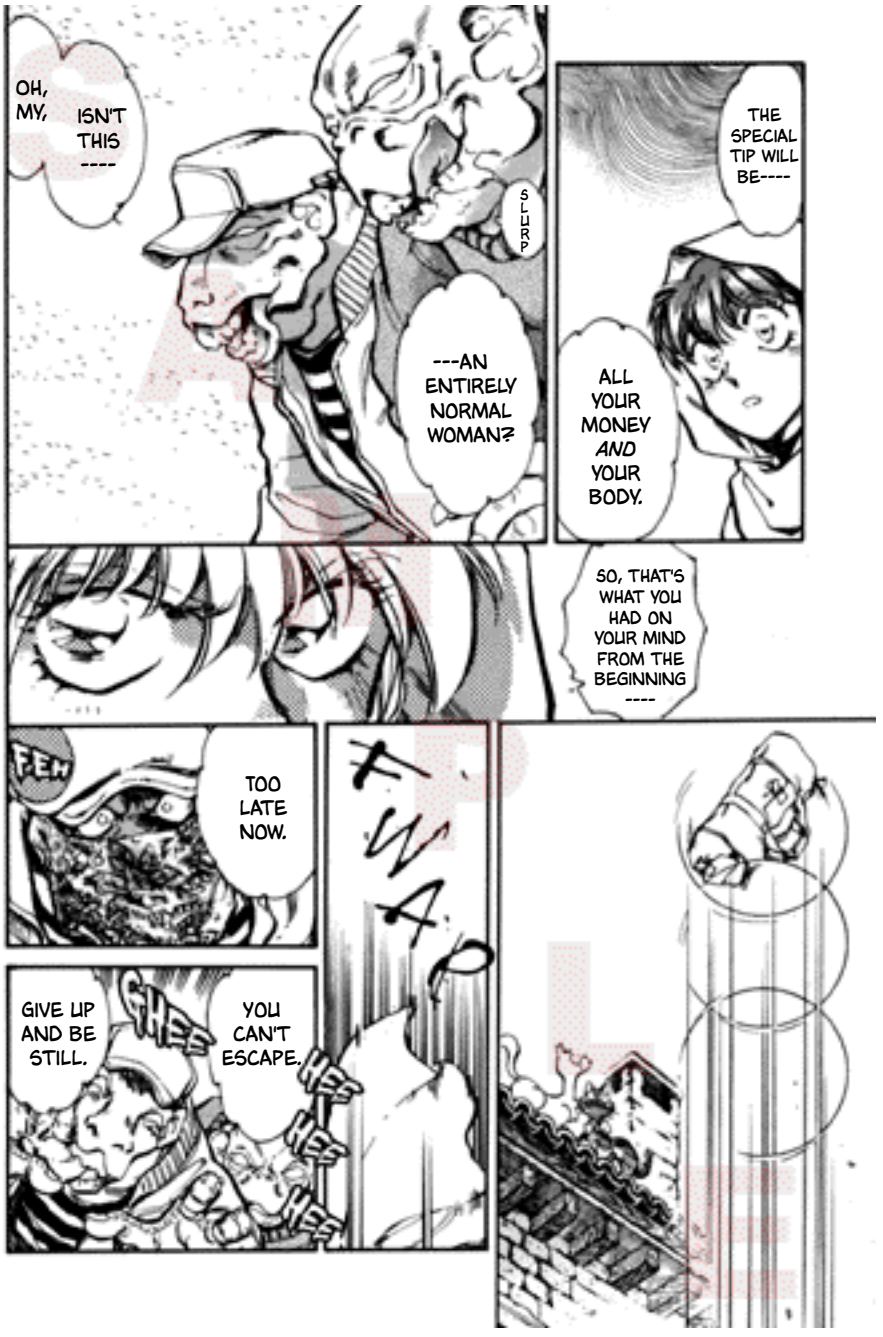

YOU CAME ALL THE WAY TO THIS TOWN ---
--TO WORK?
SKWEEK
SKWEEK
WORK 3
The Boy of Barcacia 1

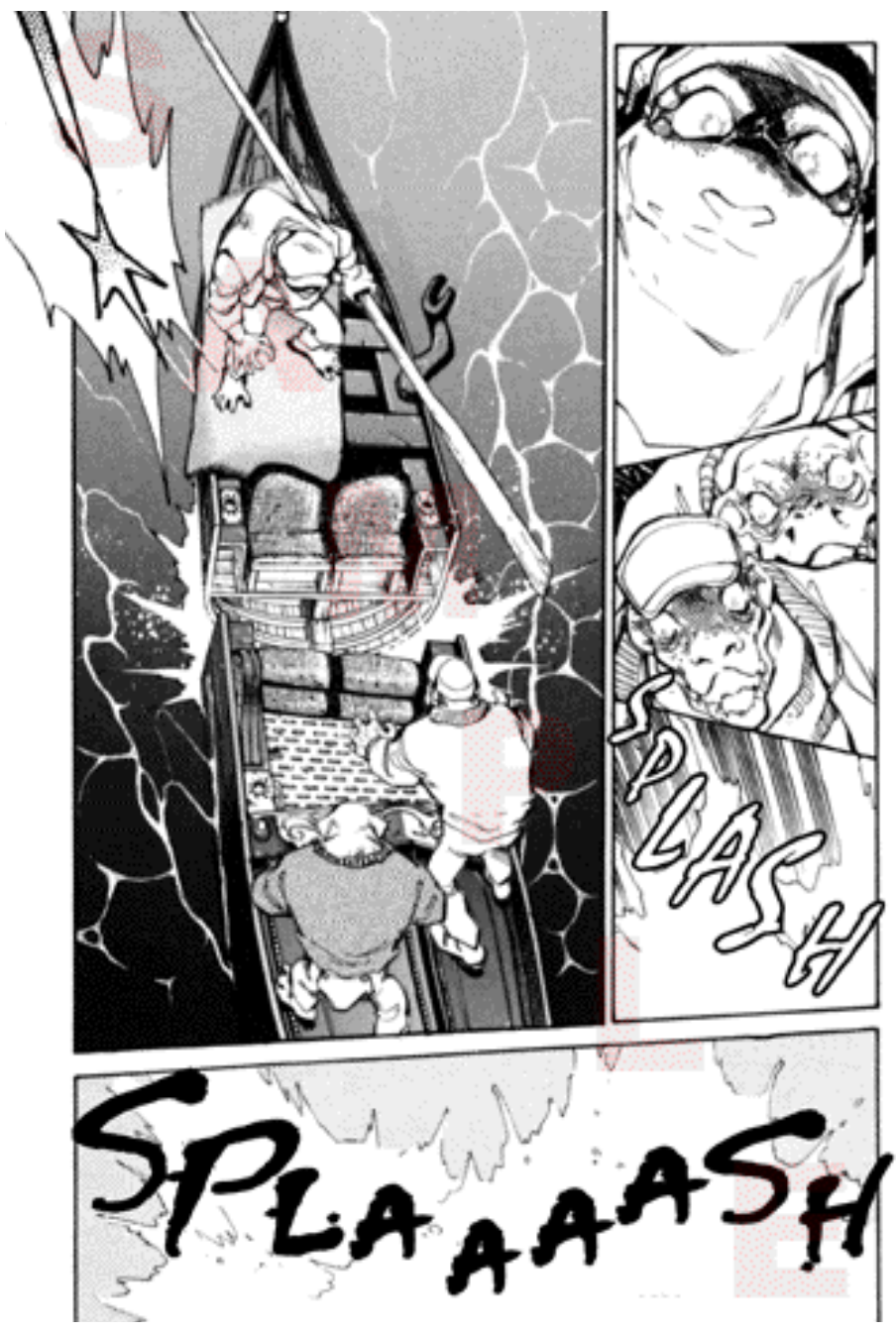
NOT MANY PEOPLE LIVE HERE ANY-MORE.
YOU NEVER KNOW HOW LONG THIS TOWN WILL LAST.
IS THERE SUCH AN ATTRAC-TIVE JOB IN A PLACE LIKE THIS?
SKWEEK
SKWEEK
SKWEEK
.....
.....

WATCH OUT!
GRASP
BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM
DON'T BE DAZED ON THE WATER!!
BE CARE-FUL, OR YOU'LL BE DRAGGED INTO THE WATER AND *EATEN.*

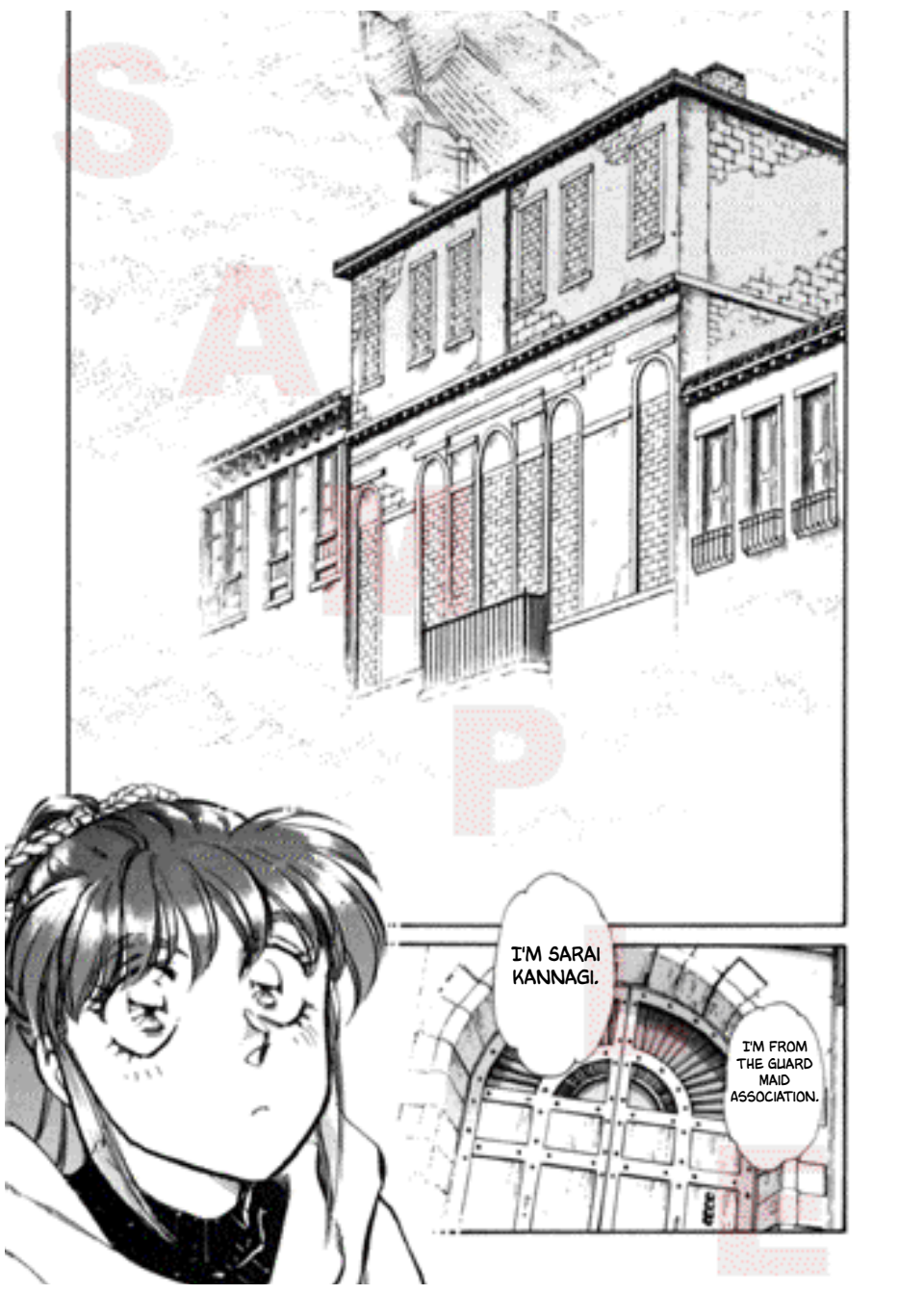

A TIP?!
I THOUGHT PAYMENT WAS JUST A GOLD COIN.
THAT'S MORE THAN ENOUGH-- AND I EVE TIPPED YOU!
CLINK
CLINK
CLINK
CLINK
DON'T YOU UNDER-STAND? I SAVED YOUR LIFE,
YOUNG LADY.

!
MY ----
---GRATI-TUDE?!
UNTIL I'M SURE THAT YOU'RE THANKFUL.
I WON'T LET YOU OFF THE BOAT.
CUT THE CRAP!
THAT'S BLACK-MAIL!!
I THOUGHT YOU WERE AN HON-EST GON-DOLIER.
STOMP
SWAY
SPLASH


OH, MY,
ISN'T THIS ----
SLURP
---AN ENTIRELY NORMAL WOMAN?
THE SPECIAL TIP WILL BE----
ALL YOUR MONEY AND YOUR BODY.
SO, THAT'S WHAT YOU HAD ON YOUR MIND FROM THE BEGINNING ----
FEW
TOO LATE NOW.
KWAP
GIVE UP AND BE STILL.
YOU CAN'T ESCAPE.
HEE HEE HEE HEE


SPLASH
SPLAAAASH

THUD
THOMP
WAA!
WAA!
ARGH!
SPLASH
HE--
SPLASH
HEEELP!
NOOO


I'M SARAI KANNAGI.
I'M FROM THE GUARD MAID ASSOCIATION.

SARAI KANNAGI (15)
WE HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE PERSON AT LEFT IS AN EXCELLENT GUARD MAID OF THIS ASSOCIATION AND WE GUARANTEE HER ABILITIES.
UM----
COULD YOU PLEASE ANNOUNCE MY ARRIVAL TO YOUR MASTER.....?
COME IN.
SHE LOOKS EXTREMELY USELESS.
A LITTLE GIRL LIKE HER A GUARD MAID?
IS THIS FOR REAL? HARD TO BELIEVE.
THE LETTER LOOKS REAL, BUT---
COULD SHE BE USEFUL FOR SOME THING?

I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU, MISS SARAI.
NOW I CAN LIFT A LOAD OFF MY SHOULDERS.
KCHK
ARE YOU THE MAS-TER?
COME ALONG.
SHE'S AN IDIOT!!
HE'S A DOCTOR!
HE PROTECTS MASTER PAOLO!!
MADAM'S HOME DOCTOR!!
HE'S SO PERETTY!!
I'LL INTRO-DUCE YOU TO YOUR MASTER.
PLEASE WAIT
DOCTOR, PLEASE WAIT!!
DOCTOR!
LET US GUIDE HER!!
YOU'LL BE FRUS-TRATED WITH THEIR GUIDE.

IT WAS A SOMBER HOUSE.

THERE WAS NO LIGHT COMING IN FROM OUTSIDE--EVEN DURING THE DAY

BECAUSE ALL THE WINDOWS WERE COVERED WITH BRICKS.

A SOUR SMELL WAS IN THE SOOTY, STAGNANT AIR-----

IT WAS A FAR FROM HEALTHY ATMOSPHERE.

I'M STARTING TO FEEL DEPRESSED.

I GOTTA STAY HERE FOR THREE MONTHS?

KNOCK KNOCK

PAOLO!

THIS IS DR. PERETTI.

YOUR GUARD MAID IS HERE.

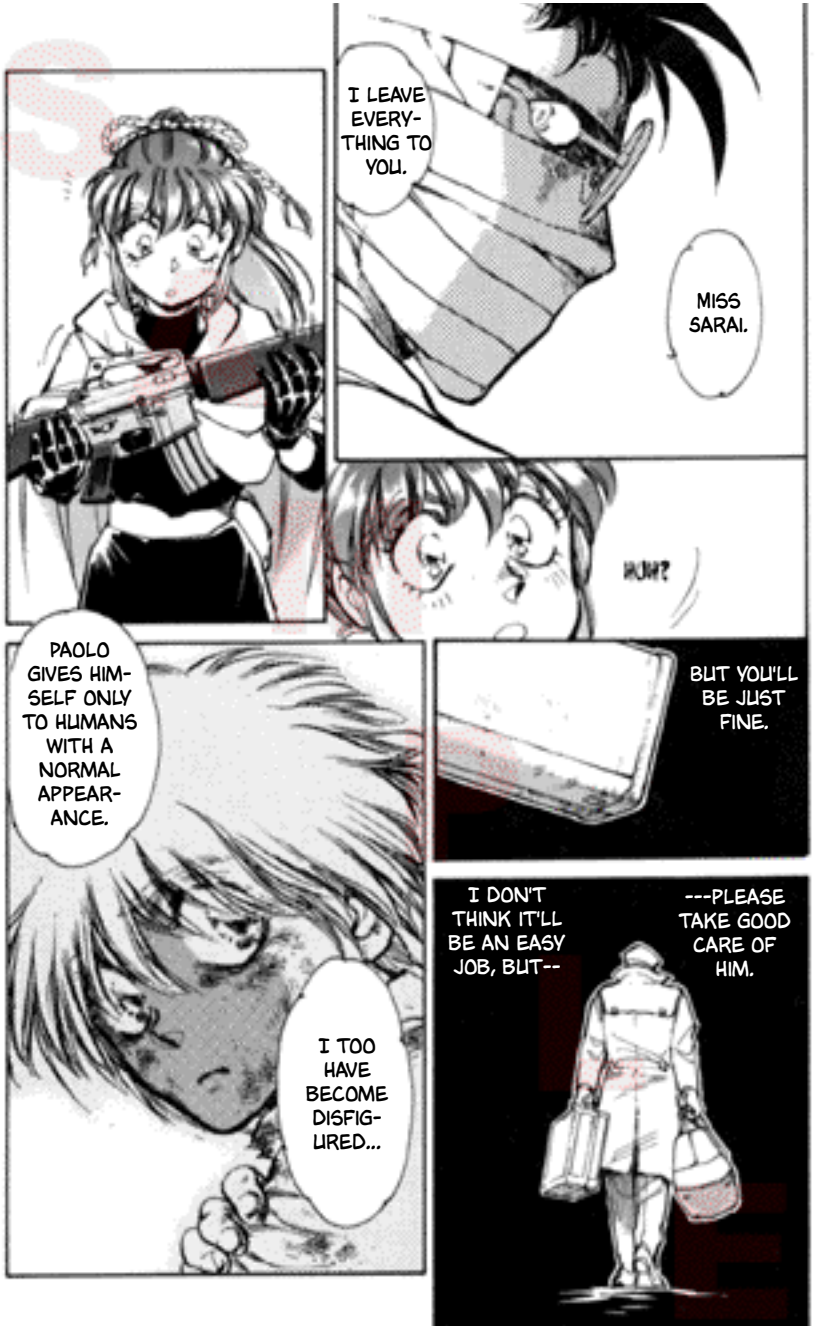
I'M COMING IN.

SKWEEK...

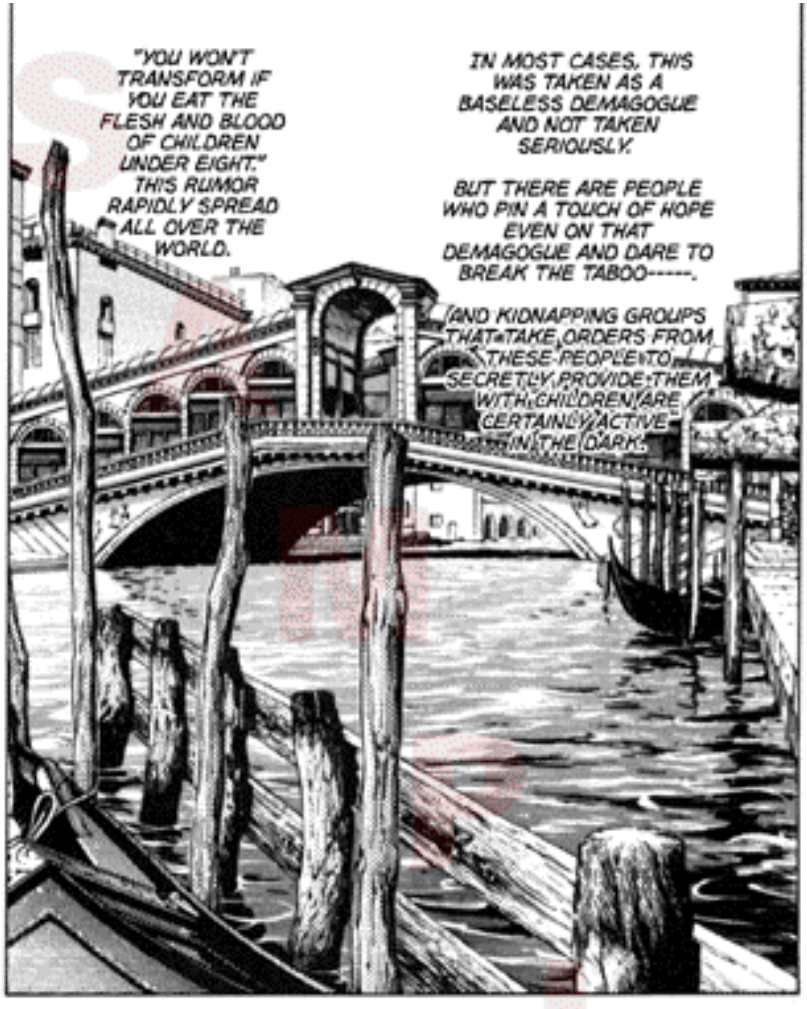
RUB
RUB
PAT
PAT
PAOLO

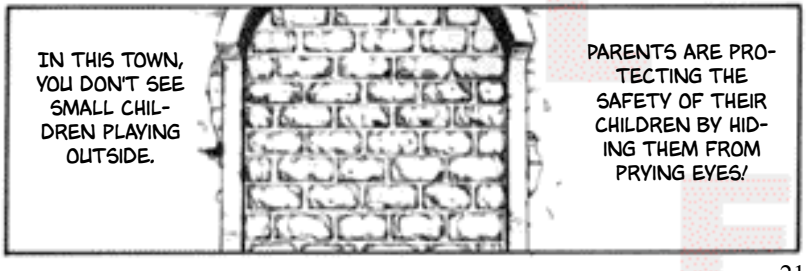
THIS IS THE DEPEND-ABLE YOUNG LADY
WHO WILL PROTECT YOU START-ING TODAY.
I'M SARAI KANNAGI, A GUARD MAID.
WHA--, WHAT'S WITH THIS CHILD?
NICE TO MEET YOU.
FWIP
HE'S PAOLO MAC-VECCI*, YOUR MASTER.
RAGGED CLOTHES.
DIRTY AND SKINNY, JUST LIKE THE STREET CHIL-DREN---
HIS MOTHER, WHO HIRED YOU, PASSED AWAY THREE MONTHS AGO.
I REQUESTED THE ASSOCIATION TO HAVE YOU SENT FOL-LOWING THE LAST WISHES SHE'D WRIT-TEN IN HER WILL.

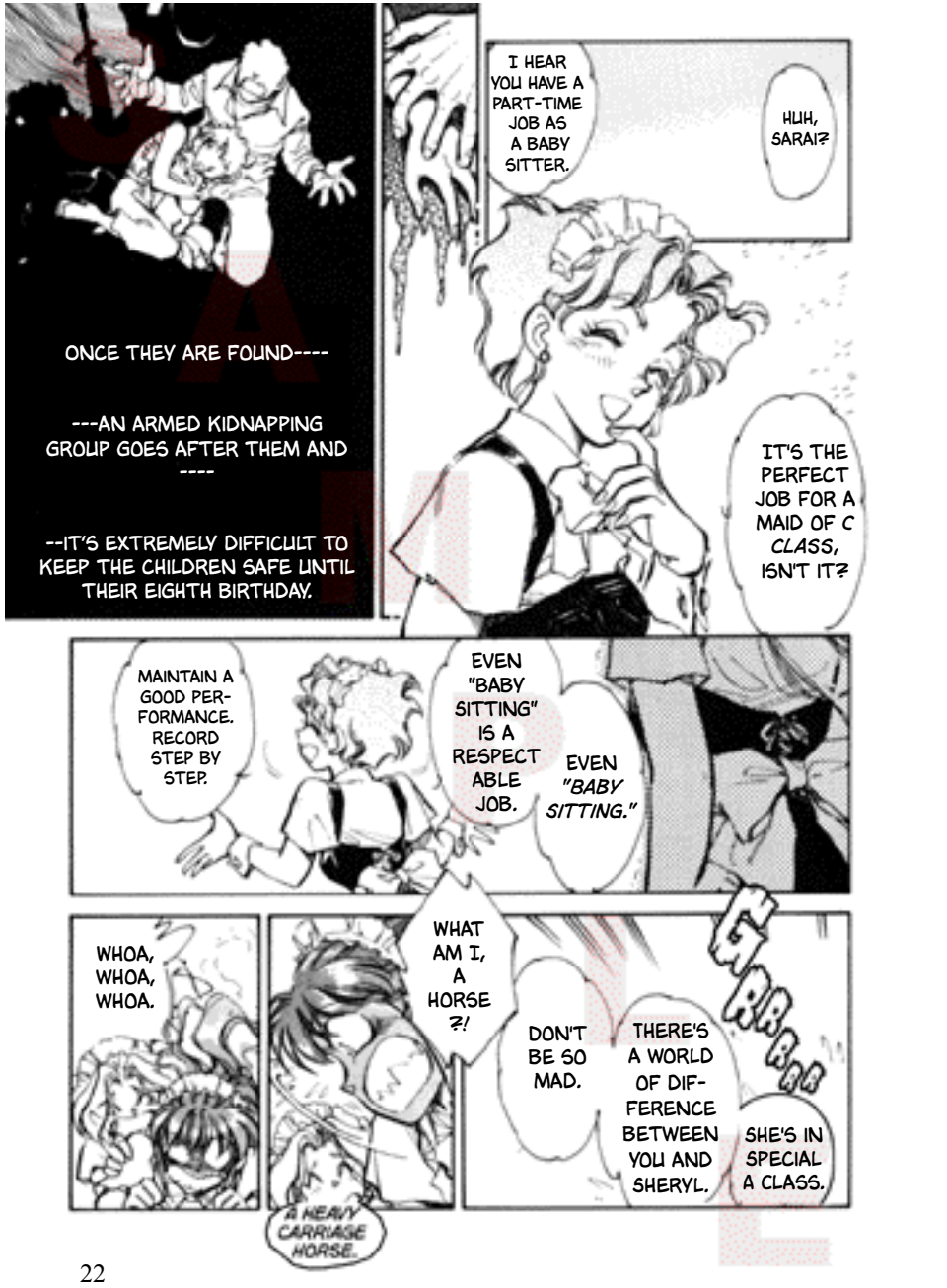
THIS'S MY OLD ROOM.
IT'S YOURS NOW.
THIS'S THE ONLY ROOM IN THE MAN-SION--
-WHERE THE OUT-SIDE LIGHT COMES IN. I BROKE THE BRICKS.
IF YOU DON'T LIKE THIS ROOM, USE ANOTH-ER ONE.
THERE ARE MANY ROOMS.
NO, IT'S ALL RIGHT.
BUT WHAT ABOUT YOU, DOCTOR ---?
I'LL GO BACK TO MY ORIGINAL JOB.
AS A DOC-TOR, I HAVE MIXED FEEL-INGS...
...ABOUT HURTING PEOPLE, NO MATTER HOW VICIOUS THEY ARE.

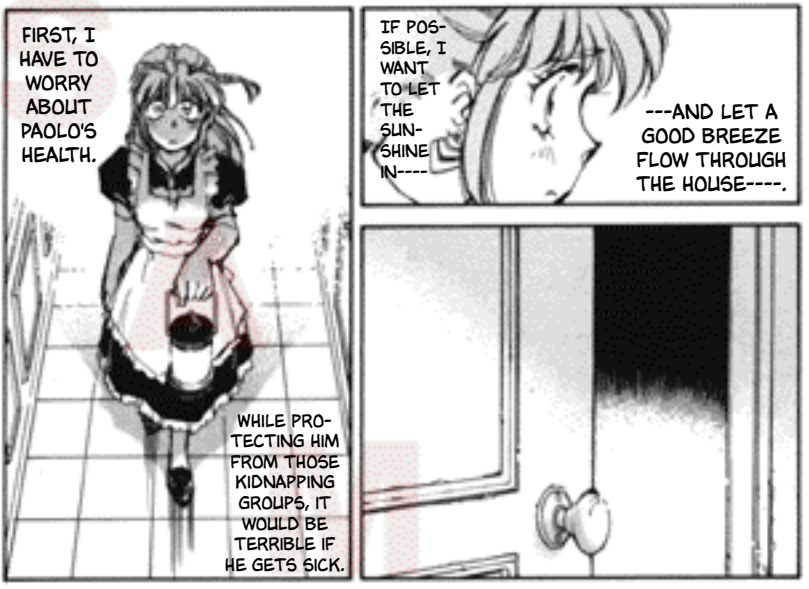

I LEAVE EVERY-THING TO YOU.
MISS SARAI.
HUH?
BUT YOU'LL BE JUST FINE.
PAOLO GIVES HIM-SELF ONLY TO HUMANS WITH A NORMAL APPEAR-ANCE.
I TOO HAVE BECOME DISFIG-URED...
I DON'T THINK IT'LL BE AN EASY JOB, BUT--
---PLEASE TAKE GOOD CARE OF HIM.

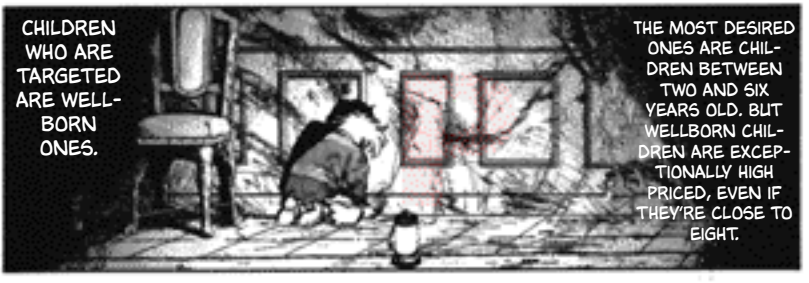
NOW--
THE PLACES TO OPEN ARE THE FRONT ENTRANCE AND OTHER TWO PLACES.
LET'S CHANGE AND REFRESH THE AIR IN THE ENTIRE HOUSE.
HEY!!
DON'T OPEN IT
WITHOUT MY PERMISSION
HEY!!
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?!
YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN AND WHERE THEY'LL ATTACK FROM!
WHAT DO YOU THINK I CAME HERE TO DO?!


"YOU WON'T TRANSFORM IF YOU EAT THE FLESH AND BLOOD OF CHILDREN UNDER EIGHT." THIS RUMOR RAPIDLY SPREAD ALL OVER THE WORLD.
IN MOST CASES, THIS WAS TAKEN AS A BASELESS DEMAGOGUE AND NOT TAKEN SERIOUSLY.
BUT THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO PIN A TOUCH OF HOPE EVEN ON THAT DEMAGOGUE AND DARE TO BREAK THE TABOO-----.
AND KIDNAPPING GROUPS THAT TAKE ORDERS FROM THESE PEOPLE TO SECRETLY PROVIDE THEM WITH CHILDREN ARE CERTAINLY ACTIVE IN THE DARK.


IN THIS TOWN, YOU DON'T SEE SMALL CHILDREN PLAYING OUTSIDE.
PARENTS ARE PROTECTING THE SAFETY OF THEIR CHILDREN BY HIDING THEM FROM PRYING EYES!


ONCE THEY ARE FOUND----
---AN ARMED KIDNAPPING GROUP GOES AFTER THEM AND ----
--IT'S EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO KEEP THE CHILDREN SAFE UNTIL THEIR EIGHTH BIRTHDAY.
I HEAR YOU HAVE A PART-TIME JOB AS A BABY SITTER.
HUH, SARA!?
IT'S THE PERFECT JOB FOR A MAID OF C CLASS, ISN'T IT?
MAINTAIN A GOOD PERFORMANCE. RECORD STEP BY STEP.
EVEN "BABY SITTING" IS A RESPECTABLE JOB.
EVEN "BABY SITTING."
WHOA, WHOA, WHOA.
A HEAVY CARRIAGE HORSE.
WHAT AM I, A HORSE?!
DON'T BE SO MAD.
THERE'S A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOU AND SHERYL.
GRRRR
SHE'S IN SPECIAL A CLASS.


FIRST, I HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT PAOLO'S HEALTH.
WHILE PROTECTING HIM FROM THOSE KIDNAPPING GROUPS, IT WOULD BE TERRIBLE IF HE GETS SICK.
IF POSSIBLE, I WANT TO LET THE SUNSHINE IN----
---AND LET A GOOD BREEZE FLOW THROUGH THE HOUSE----.


CHILDREN WHO ARE TARGETED ARE WELL-BORN ONES.
THE MOST DESIRED ONES ARE CHILDREN BETWEEN TWO AND SIX YEARS OLD. BUT WELLBORN CHILDREN ARE EXCEPTIONALLY HIGH PRICED, EVEN IF THEY'RE CLOSE TO EIGHT.

EVEN THIS FILTHY MASTER
MUST LOOK SHINY LIKE GOLD TO THOSE KIDNAPPERS.
LISTEN, PAOLO.
YOU WANNA TAKE A BATH?

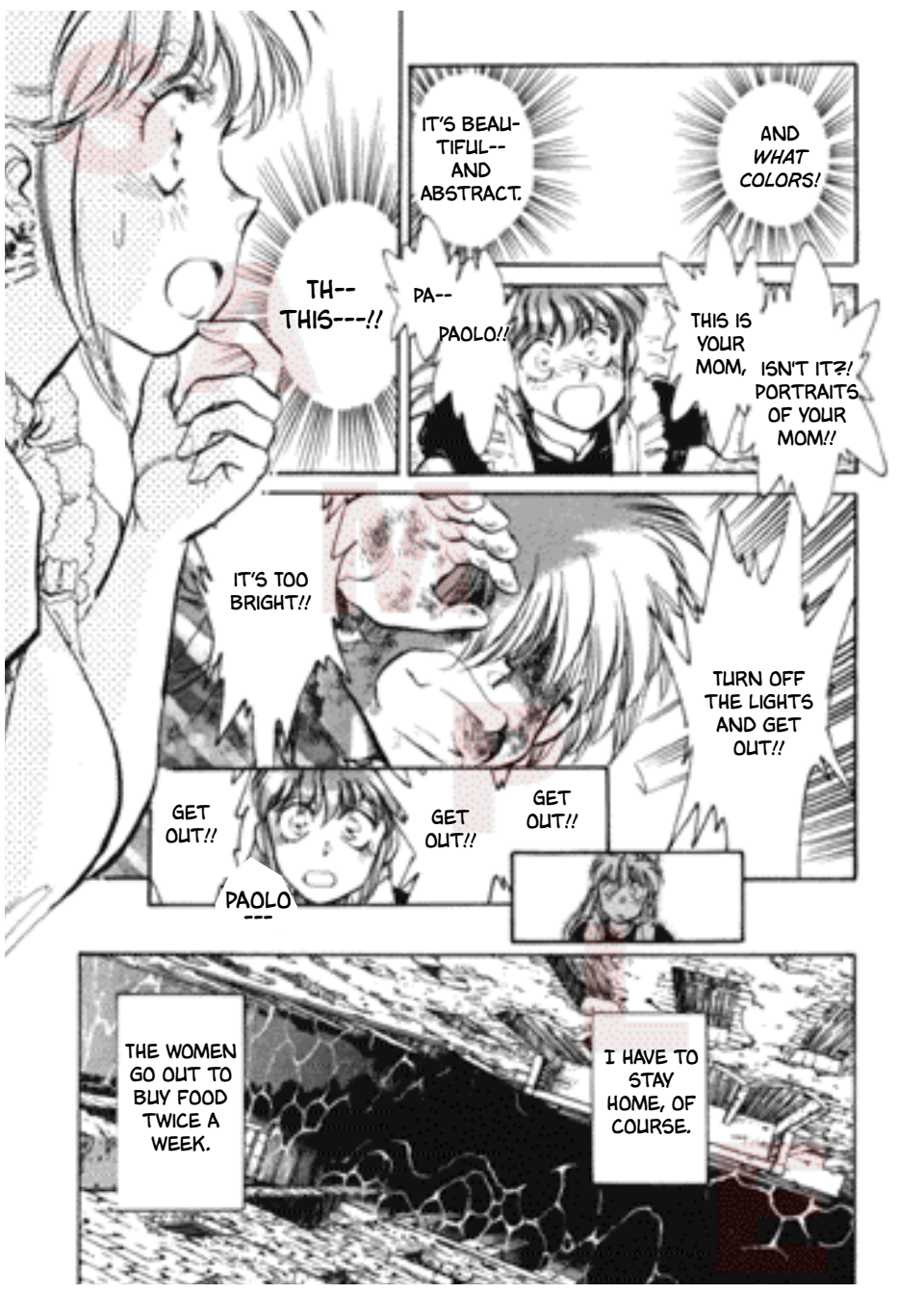
YOU HAVEN'T TAKEN A BATH FOR A LONG TIME, HAVE YOU?
YOU'RE ALL COVERED WITH PAINT.
C'MON.
TAKE A BATH.
GET REFRESHED AND CHANGE YOUR CLOTHES.
AND HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WEARING THOSE CLOTHES?
THEY'RE ALL WORN OUT.
OLIVE GREEN
YOU WERE CLEAN BEFORE, WEREN'T YOU?
AFTER ALL, YOU'RE A WELL-BRED CHILD.
IF YOU KEEP YOURSELF DIRTY LIKE THAT----
--YOUR MOMMY WILL LAUGH AT YOU.
HUH?!
WAA!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
AAAAAH

SHE IS STUPID AFTER ALL.
EGG
WAHAHAHA
HE WON'T LISTEN TO YOU!
HE'LL NEVER TAKE OFF THOSE CLOTHES.
WAHAHAHAHAHA
HE DOESN'T EVEN LISTEN TO DR. PERETTI.
SNIFF
THOSE ARE THE LAST CLOTHES THE LATE MADAM PUT ON HIM WITH HER OWN HANDS.
HE WANTS ME TO STAY LIKE THIS THE WHOLE DAY.
BUT IF HE KEEPS WEARING IT----
IMPOSSIBLE!!
HE'LL NEVER TAKES OFF THOSE CLOTHES UNTIL THEY GET OFF AND HE BECOMES NAKED.
HE'LL GET SICK.
HE NEVER TAKES A BATH!!
YOU CAN JUST SPRINKLE A DISINFECTANT AND DEODORANT OVER HIM WHILE HE'S ASLEEP SO HE WON'T BE AWARE
DISINFECTANT AND DEODOR-ANT?
THAT'S TERRIBLE.
THIS IS PART OF MY MAID WORK.
I GOTTA DO SOME-THING.
.... WHAT?
IS THIS REAL?
SCRATCH
I'M NOT GOOD WITH KIDS. I'M A BATTLE MAID.
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO HANDLE KIDS!
AAR-RGGHH!,
SCRATCH
MASTER PAOLO ---
PLEASE LET ME CLEAN THE ROOM AT LEAST.

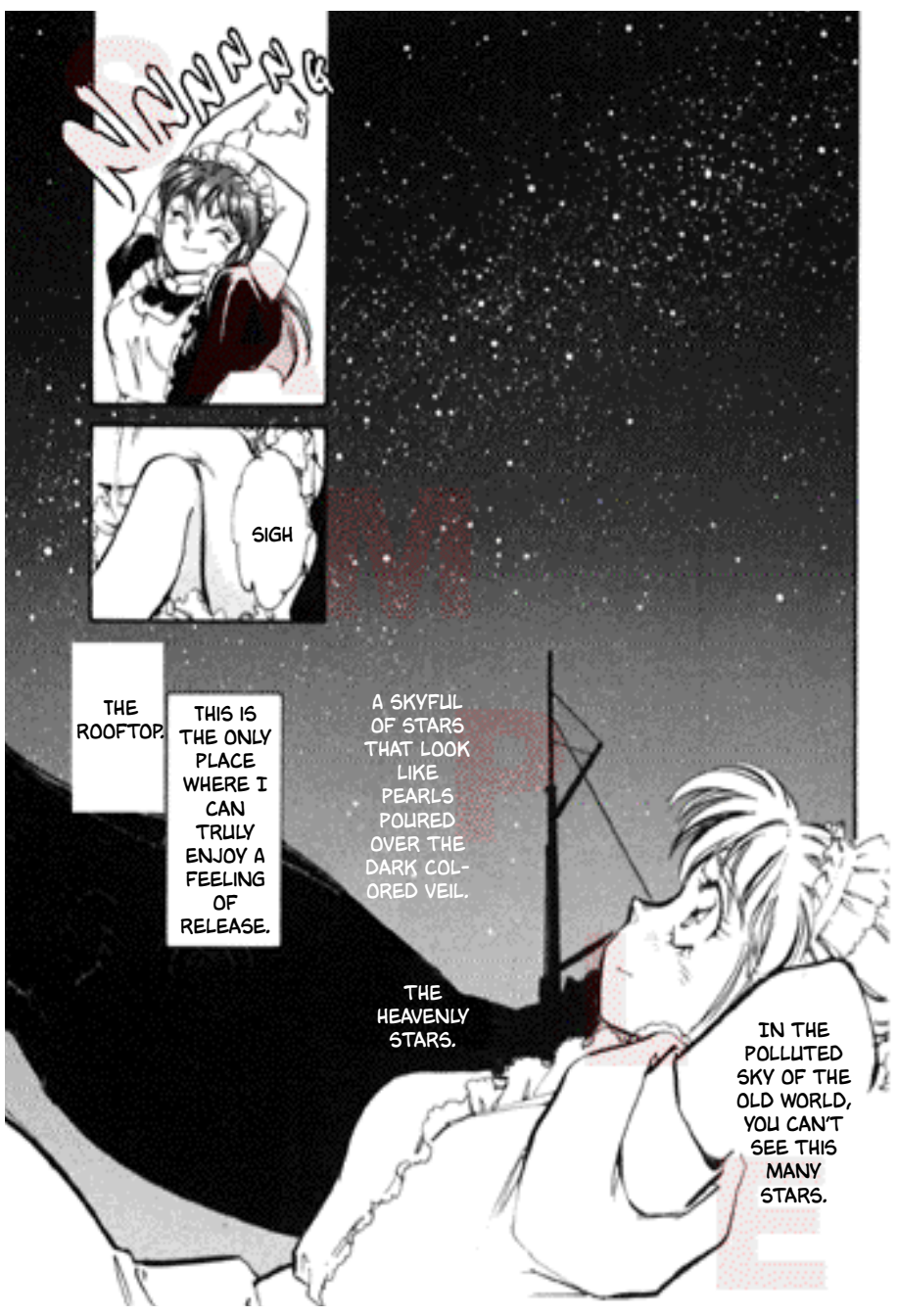
A CHILD WHO DRAWS UNINTELLIGIBLE GRAFFITI ON THE WALL ALL DAY LONG...
I WONDER WHAT HE'S THINKING?
HE'S VERY PARTICULAR ABOUT----

COLORS!
EXCUSE ME!
ARE THERE ANY EXTRA LANTERNS?
CLUTTER
CLUTTER
CLUTTER
WHAT WAS THAT?
SHE TOOK ALL THE LANTERNS SHE COULD TAKE.

THUNK
THUNK


TH-- THIS---!!
IT'S BEAU-TIFUL-- AND ABSTRACT.
AND *WHAT COLORS!*
PA-- PAOLO!!
THIS IS YOUR MOM,
ISN'T IT?! PORTRAITS OF YOUR MOM!!
IT'S TOO BRIGHT!!
TURN OFF THE LIGHTS AND GET OUT!!
GET OUT!!
GET OUT!!
GET OUT!!
PAOLO ---
THE WOMEN GO OUT TO BUY FOOD TWICE A WEEK.
I HAVE TO STAY HOME, OF COURSE.

IT'S UNDERSTANDABLE THAT THERE'S PLENTY OF FISH SINCE THIS IS A TOWN OF WATER.
BUT MEATS AND VEGETABLES ARE SURPRISINGLY PLENTIFUL, TOO.
WOW! THEY LOOK DELICIOUS.
YOU MAKE YOUR OWN MEAL.
WE'LL EAT WHAT'S LEFT OVERS FROM MASTER PAOLO'S MEAL.
DINNER'S READY, MASTER PAOLO.
DINNER'S READY, MASTER PAOLO.
DINNER'S READY, MASTER PAOLO.
--THE ONE WHO SITS AT THE TABLE IS A FILTHY STREET-CHILD.
IT'S A RICH FAMILY, AFTERALL.
EVEN IN A LIVING SITUATION LIKE THIS, THE DINNER IS FANTASTIC.
EXCEPT THE FACT THAT---

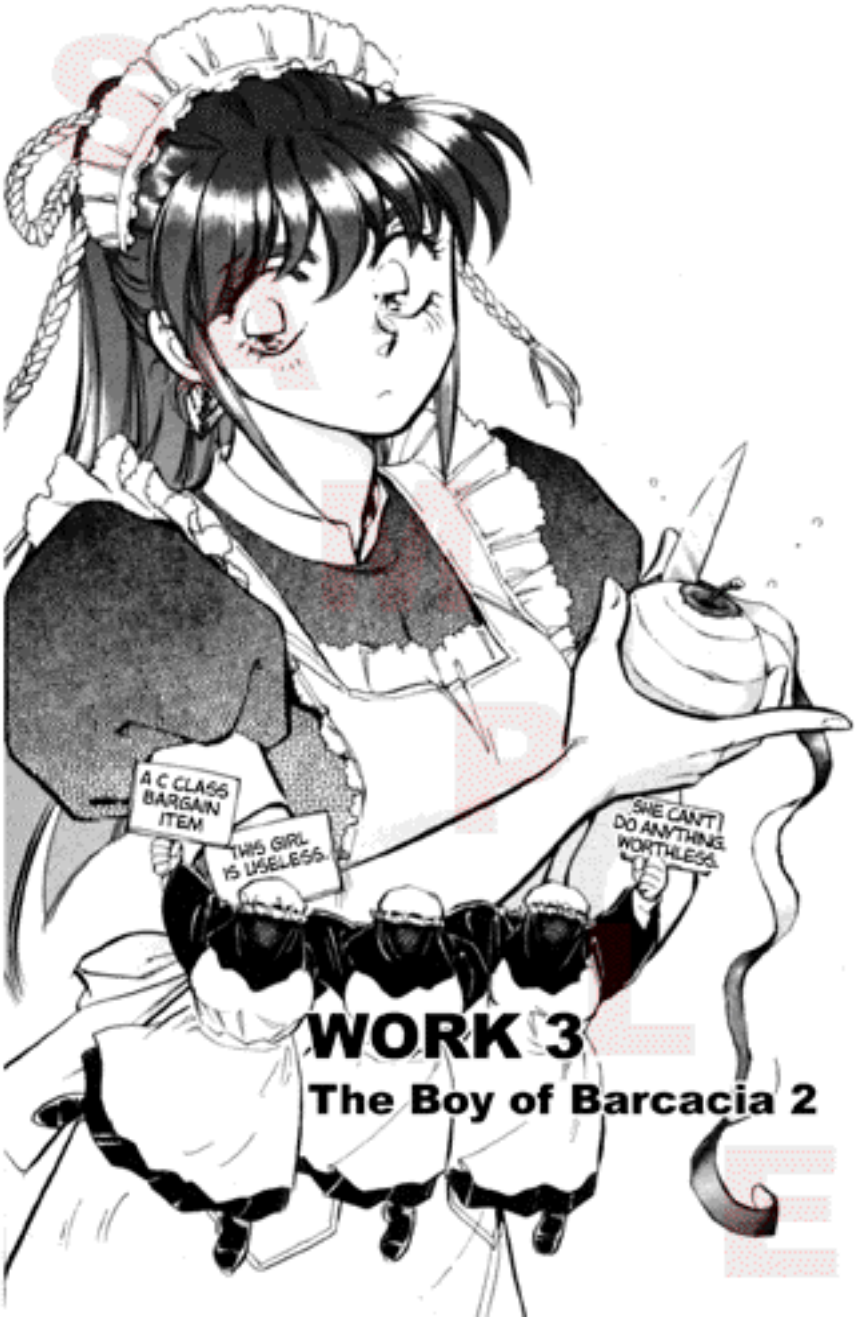

NNNNG
SIGH
THE ROOFTOP.
THIS IS THE ONLY PLACE WHERE I CAN TRULY ENJOY A FEELING OF RELEASE.
A SKYFUL OF STARS THAT LOOK LIKE PEARLS POURED OVER THE DARK COLORED VEIL.
THE HEAVENLY STARS.
IN THE POLLUTED SKY OF THE OLD WORLD, YOU CAN'T SEE THIS MANY STARS.

I'M DONE.
PAOLO HARDLY TOUCHES THESE SUMPTUOUS MEALS.
AS FAR AS I CAN SEE, HE EATS JUST A LITTLE BIT OF BREAD EVERY TIME AND HE NEVER TOUCHES COOKED DISHES.
NO WON-DER HE'S SO SKINNY.
OH DEAR, HE LEFT SO MUCH AGAIN.
IT'S NOT WORTH COOKING... SIGH
IT'S HOPELESS.
THE WOMEN ARE HAPPY. NATURALLY. THEY KNOW FROM THE BEGINNING THAT THEY CAN HAVE ALL THESE LEFT OVER MEALS.
LET'S EAT
AHHH. SO DELICIOUS!!
SO HAPPY
SNIFF, SNIFF
WHY DOESN'T HE EAT SUCH DELICIOUS FOOD?

IF IT'S BEEN LIKE THIS SINCE HIS MOTHER DIED-----

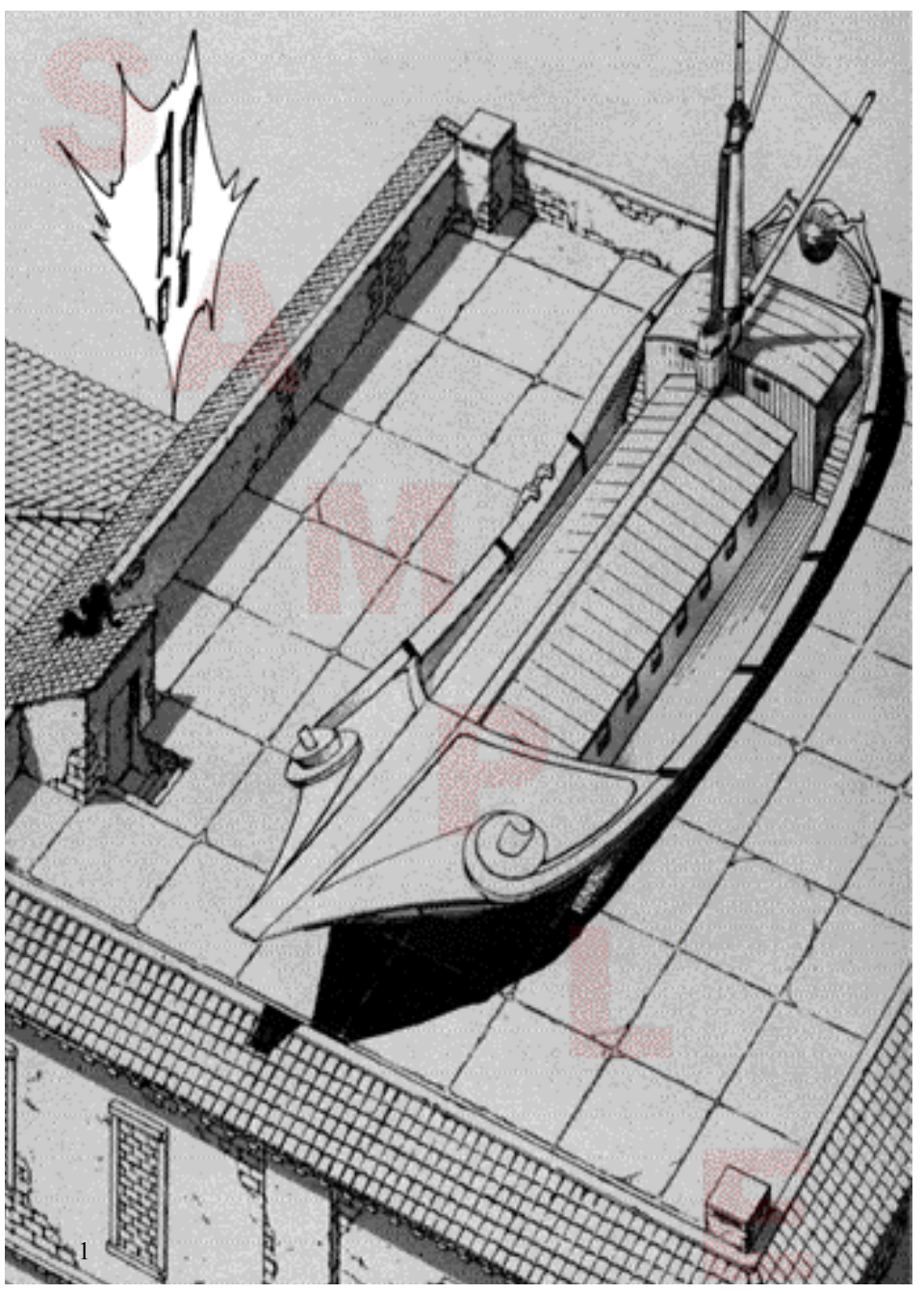
HOW DID HE SURVIVE----?

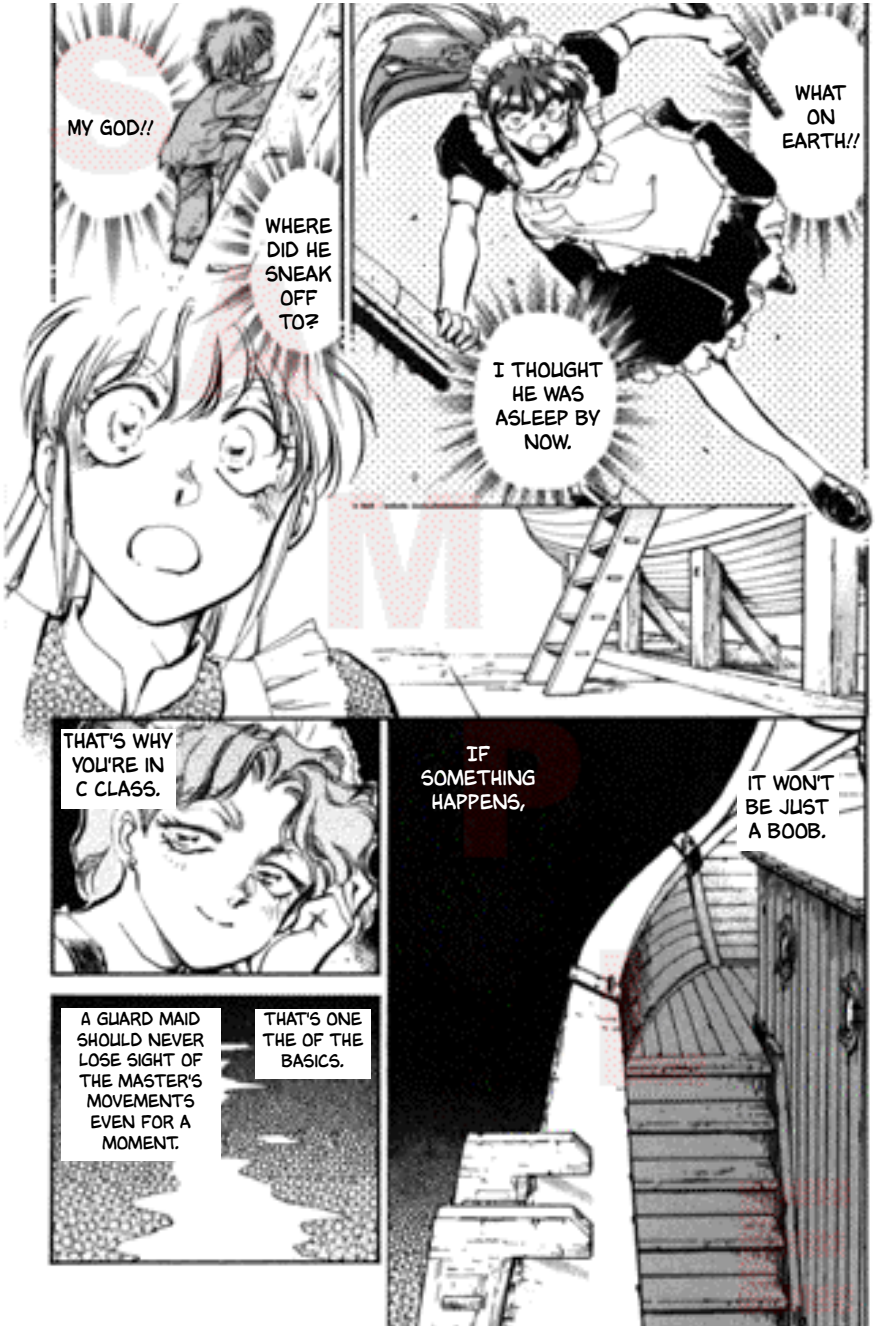
END OF WORK: 3-1



WORK 3

The Boy of Barcacia 2



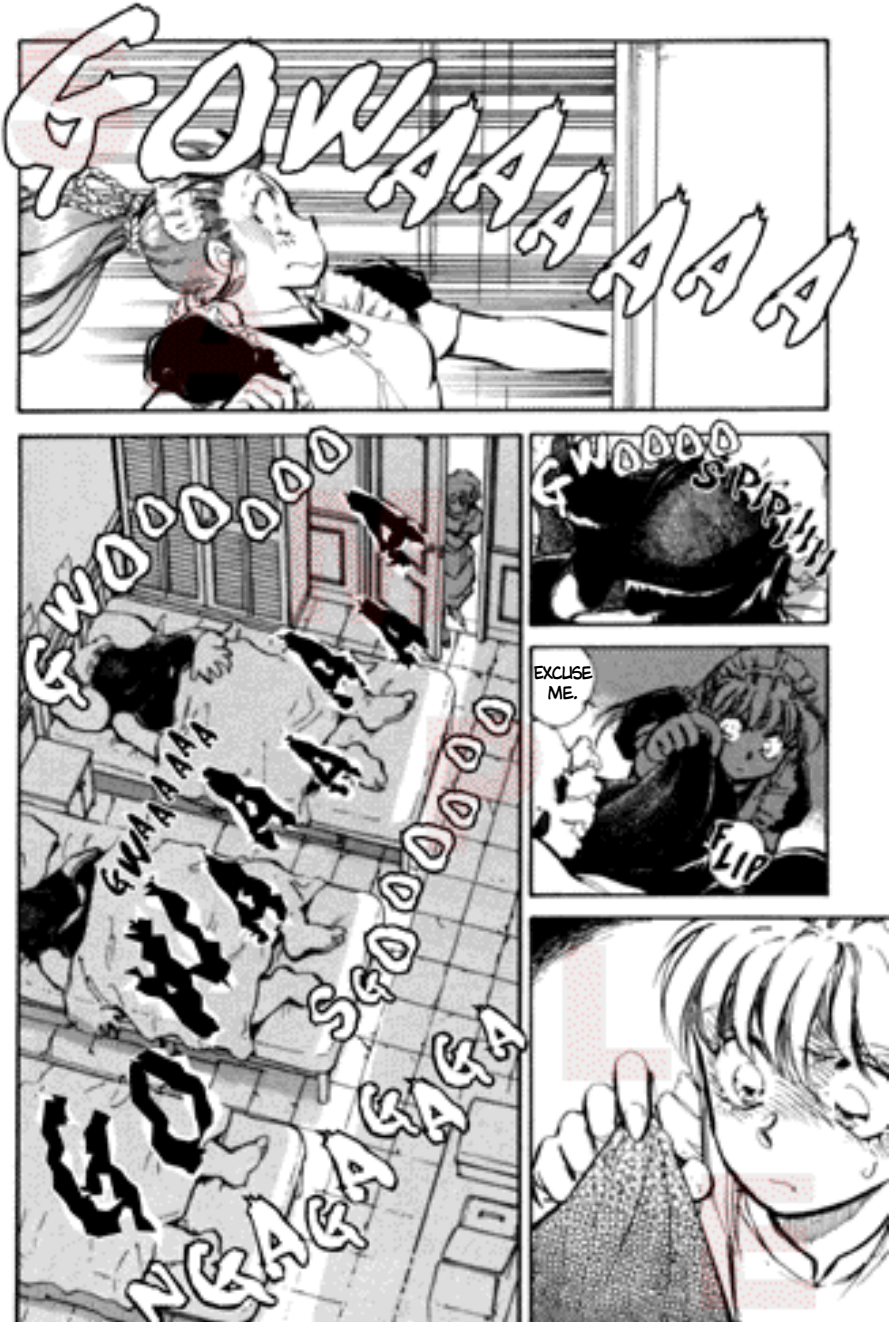

MY GOD!!
WHERE DID HE SNEAK OFF TO?
I THOUGHT HE WAS ASLEEP BY NOW.
WHAT ON EARTH!!
THAT'S WHY YOU'RE IN C CLASS.
A GUARD MAID SHOULD NEVER LOSE SIGHT OF THE MASTER'S MOVEMENTS EVEN FOR A MOMENT.
THAT'S ONE THE OF THE BASICS.
IF SOMETHING HAPPENS,
IT WON'T BE JUST A BOOB.

OOP.
WHAT'S THAT FISHY SMELL---?
GLMP GLMP GRACK GRACK
PEEL

PAOLO!
WHAT ARE YOU EAING?!
MASTER PAOLO!!
LET ME GO!!
WHY?!
LET ME GOOO!
WHY WERE YOU EATING RAW FISH?!
WAIT!!
LET ME GO, DAMN IT!
SCRATCH
AH
WERE YOU EATING A RAW FISH?!

IF I DON'T KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU---
I CAN'T LIVE UP TO YOUR MOM'S EXPECTATIONS.
YOU LOVE YOUR MOM A LOT, DON'T YOU?
YOU DRAW SUCH WONDERFUL PICTURES OF HER.
PLEASE PAOLO,
EVEN IF YOU DON'T LIKE ME -----
--TELL ME WHY, FOR YOUR MOM.
YOUR MOM ONLY WISHED YOU GROW HAPPILY AND SAFELY.....
I DON'T LIKE--- MOM.
MOM ----
--LEFT ME----
--ALONE .....

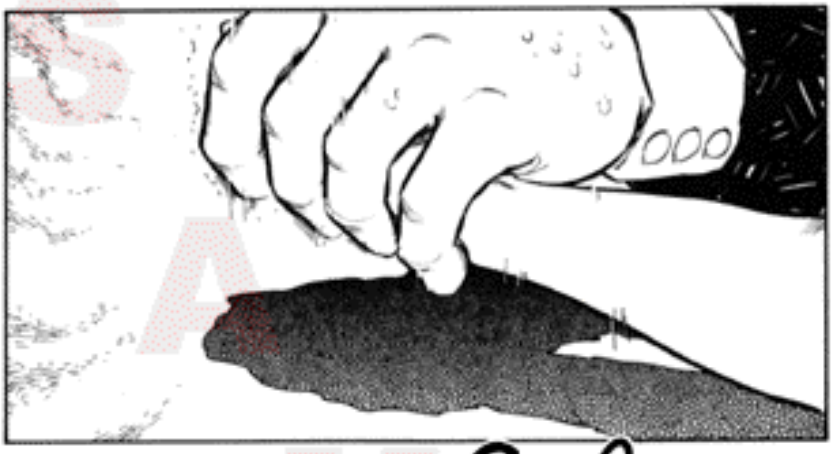
....I HAD NO IDEA THERE'S A DIRECT EXIT FROM PAOLO'S ROOM TO THE ROOFTOP..
HE MUST HAVE BEEN GOING OUT EVERY NIGHT.
BRR
SO, IS IT MERE LUCK NOTHING EVER HAPPENED?
COME TO THINK OF IT, IT'S JUST NATURAL----.
BECAUSE PAOLO'S PARENTS PREPARED THAT BOAT FOR HIM----
--IT'S NO SURPRISE THERE'S A PATHWAY LIKE THAT.
I DIDN'T EVEN THINK OF THAT.
AM I REALLY -----
RIGHT, C CLASS.
DON'T APPEAR EVERY TIME.
LLLLL GWOO
KCHK


GWAAAAA
GWOOOOO
GWAAAAAA
GOOOO

YOU WANNA TASTE IT?
YES.
PLEASE LET ME TASTE YOUR COOKING.
I'D LIKE TO GET INSPIRATION FOR MY OWN RECIPIES/.
HMM.
-SHE FINALLY SAID SOMETHING WORTH WHILE
HIGH CLASS DISHES LIKE THESE--
A NEWCOMER CAN NOT APPRECIATE EASILY/
WE ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO DEMONSTRATE ----
---OUR ABILITY UNLESS IT'S NEEDED.
PLUNK
SHOW US YOUR REAL ABILITY AS A GUARD MAID.
YOUR LETTER GUARANTEED YOUR ABILITY, BUT----
WE'RE WORRYING IF WE'VE FED YOU FOR NOTHING.
WE JUST CAN'T TRUST YOU.
WE DON'T WANT YOU TO RUN AWAY IN EMERGENCY.
ONLY IF YOU CAN CONVINCE US WILL WE LET YOU TASTE OUR COOKING/

ARM WRESTL-ING?
UM .....
GUARD MAIDS ARE BATTLE EXPERTS .....
OH, GOD!
SHE'S REALLY IRRITATING!
REALLY FRUSTRATING!
ENOUGH TALKING!!
JUST SHOW US HOW STRONG YOU ARE!!
IF YOU WIN, WE CAN LET YOU EAT MASTER PAOLO'S MEAL EVERYDAY.
SPECIAL DINNER EVERYDAY!!!
DO IT FOR REAL.
OR YOU'LL BREAK YOUR ARM.
GET SET!!

FIGHT!!
WOOSH
HEH, HEH
SO MADAM REALLY PAY LOTS OF MONEY TO HIRE TWO GIRLS?
IS SHE REALLY A GUARD MAID?!
THOUGHT SHE WOULD HANG
TOO WEAK, SHE'S TOO WEAK!!
IT'S A BAD JOKE!
IT'S A SCAM!
?



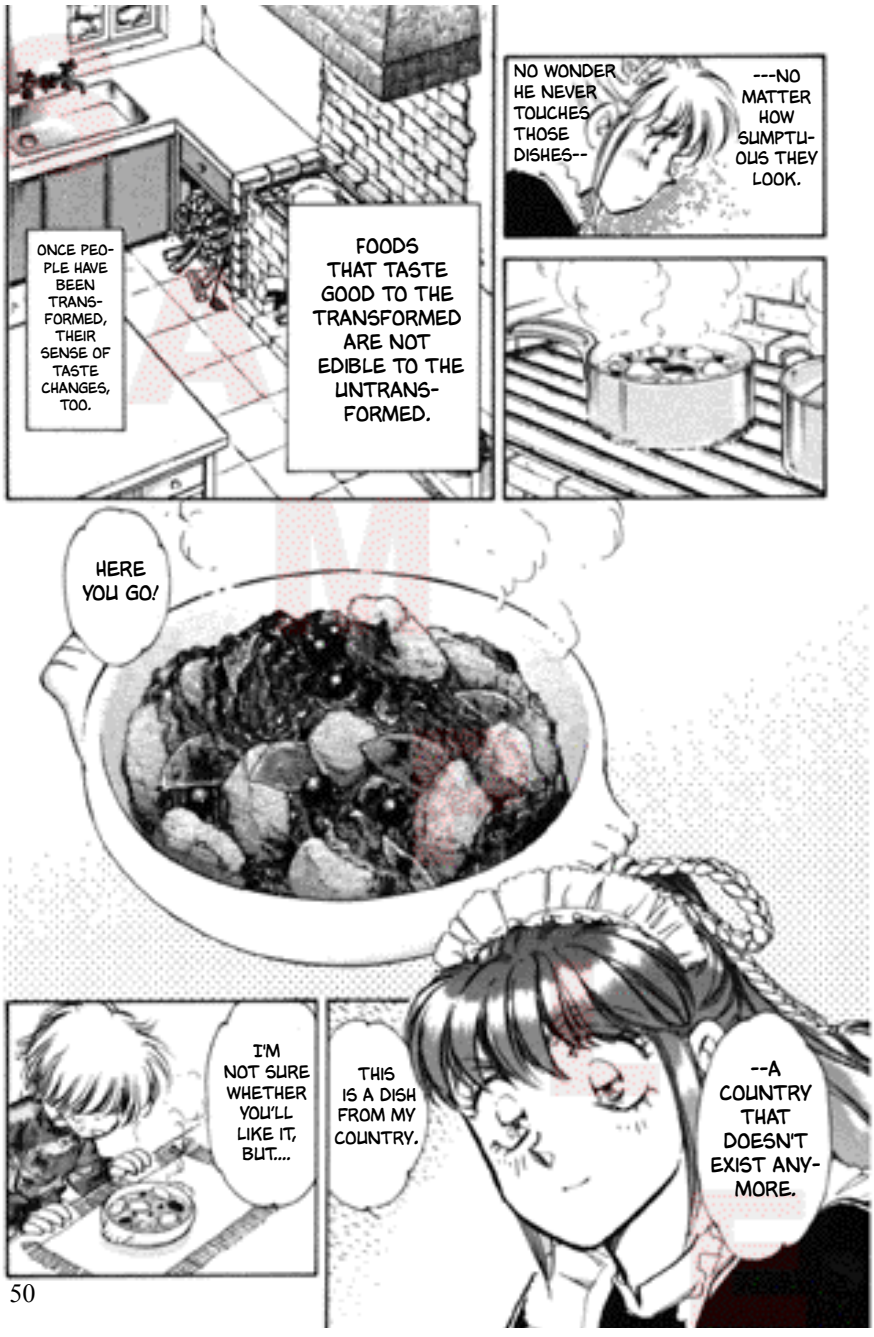
SHE'S A BAD LOOSER!
OH, DEAR!
SKWEEK
NNG GUAAAAA

PLEASE UNDER-STAND.
THIS KIND OF A COM-PETITION IS NOT A GUARD MAID'S DUTY.
Die, you damn kid.
SHOW THEM, SARAI.

WHIP

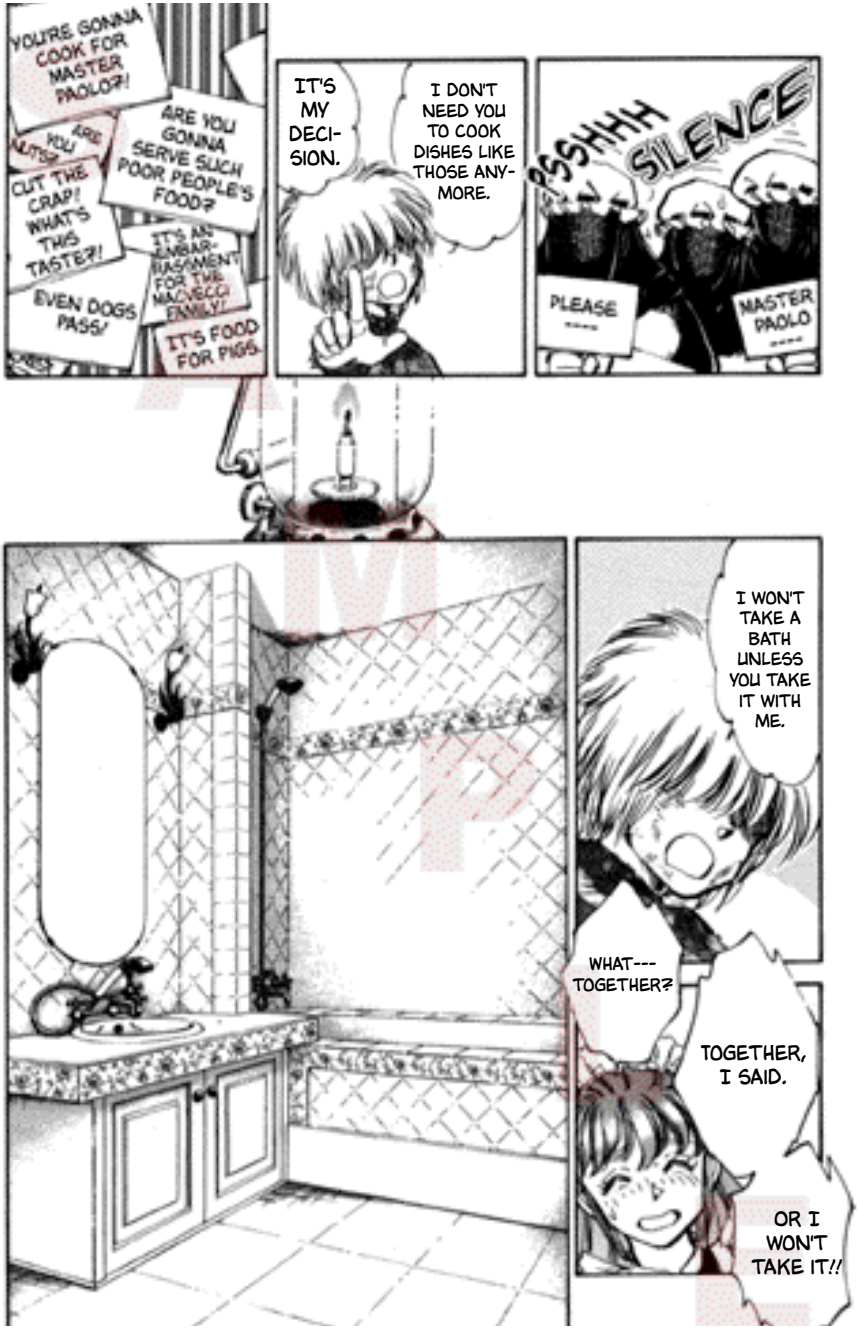
CRACK

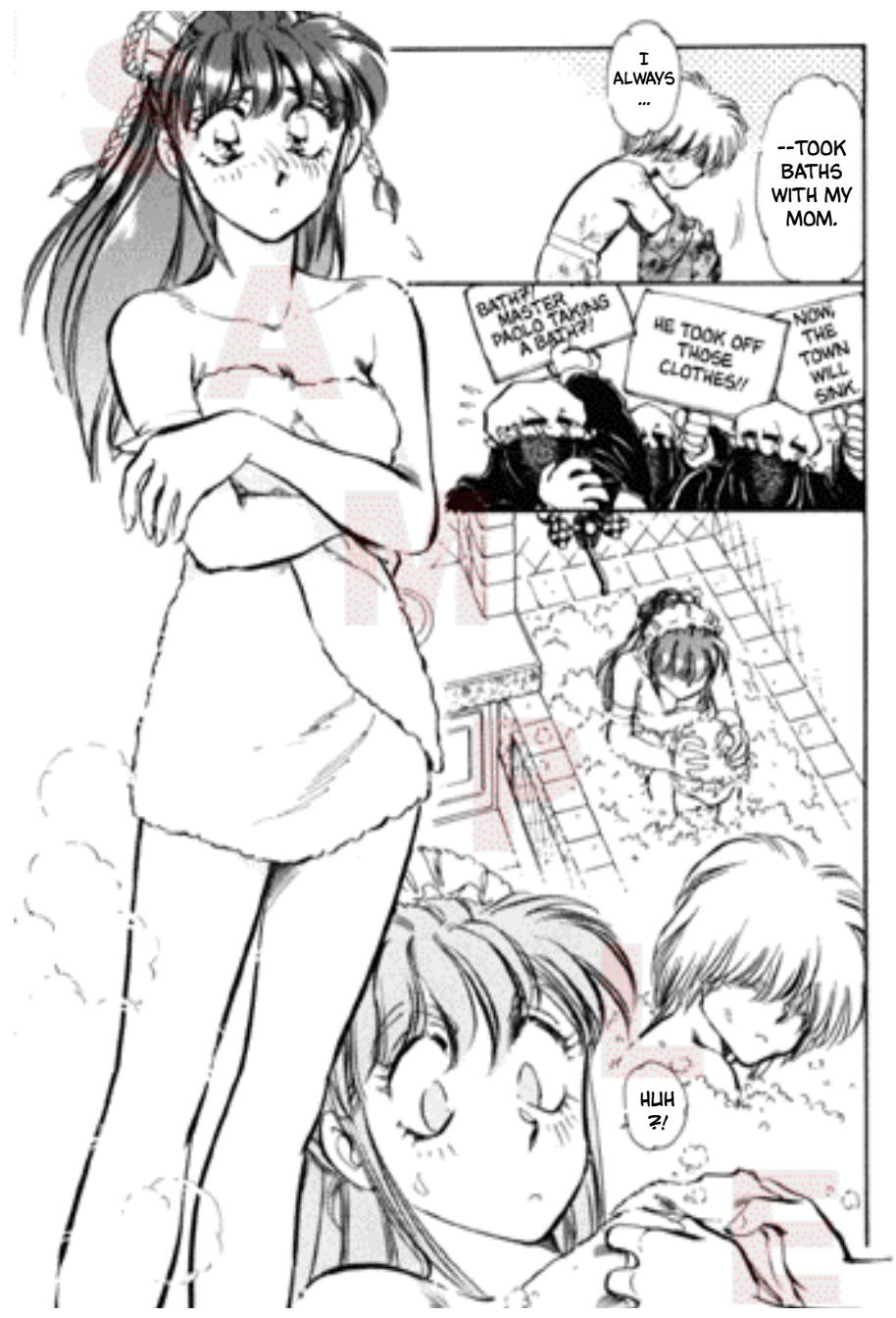
SORRY.
IT WAS MASTER'S ORDER.
MASTER PAOLO!!
WELL THEN ---
I GUESS I'LL EAT.


ONCE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN TRANSFORMED, THEIR SENSE OF TASTE CHANGES, TOO.
FOODS THAT TASTE GOOD TO THE TRANSFORMED ARE NOT EDIBLE TO THE UNTRANSFORMED.
NO WONDER HE NEVER TOUCHES THOSE DISHES--
---NO MATTER HOW SUMPTUOUS THEY LOOK.
HERE YOU GO!
I'M NOT SURE WHETHER YOU'LL LIKE IT, BUT....
THIS IS A DISH FROM MY COUNTRY.
--A COUNTRY THAT DOESN'T EXIST ANYMORE.

WAIT
GLUP GLUP
IT'S CALLED NIKU-JAGA (POTATOES WITH MEAT)
IT'S THE FIRST DISH A GIRL WANTS TO COOK FOR A BOY SHE FALLS IN LOVE WITH.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO TRY?
JUST-COOKED RICE.
IT'S MY ENERGY SOURCE.
HE'S EATING IN THE KITCHEN!
MY GOD!
IT GOES WELL WITH NIKU-JAGA.

HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
TAKE YOUR TIME.
IT'S DELI-CIOUS.
SARAI.
IT'S SO DELI-CIOUS.


YOU'RE GONNA COOK FOR MASTER PAOLO?!
ARE YOU GONNA SERVE SUCH POOR PEOPLE'S FOOD?
ARE YOU NUTS?
CUT THE CRAP! WHAT'S THIS TASTE?!
IT'S AN EMBARRASSMENT FOR THE MACVEGGI FAMILY!
EVEN DOGS PASS!
IT'S FOOD FOR PIGS
IT'S MY DECISION.
I DON'T NEED YOU TO COOK DISHES LIKE THOSE ANYMORE.
SSHHH SILENCE
PLEASE
MASTER PAOLO
I WON'T TAKE A BATH UNLESS YOU TAKE IT WITH ME.
WHAT--- TOGETHER?
TOGETHER, I SAID.
OR I WON'T TAKE IT!!


I ALWAYS ...
--TOOK BATHS WITH MY MOM.
BATH?! MASTER PAOLO TAKING A BATH?!
HE TOOK OFF THOSE CLOTHES!!
NOW, THE TOWN WILL SINK.
HUH ?!

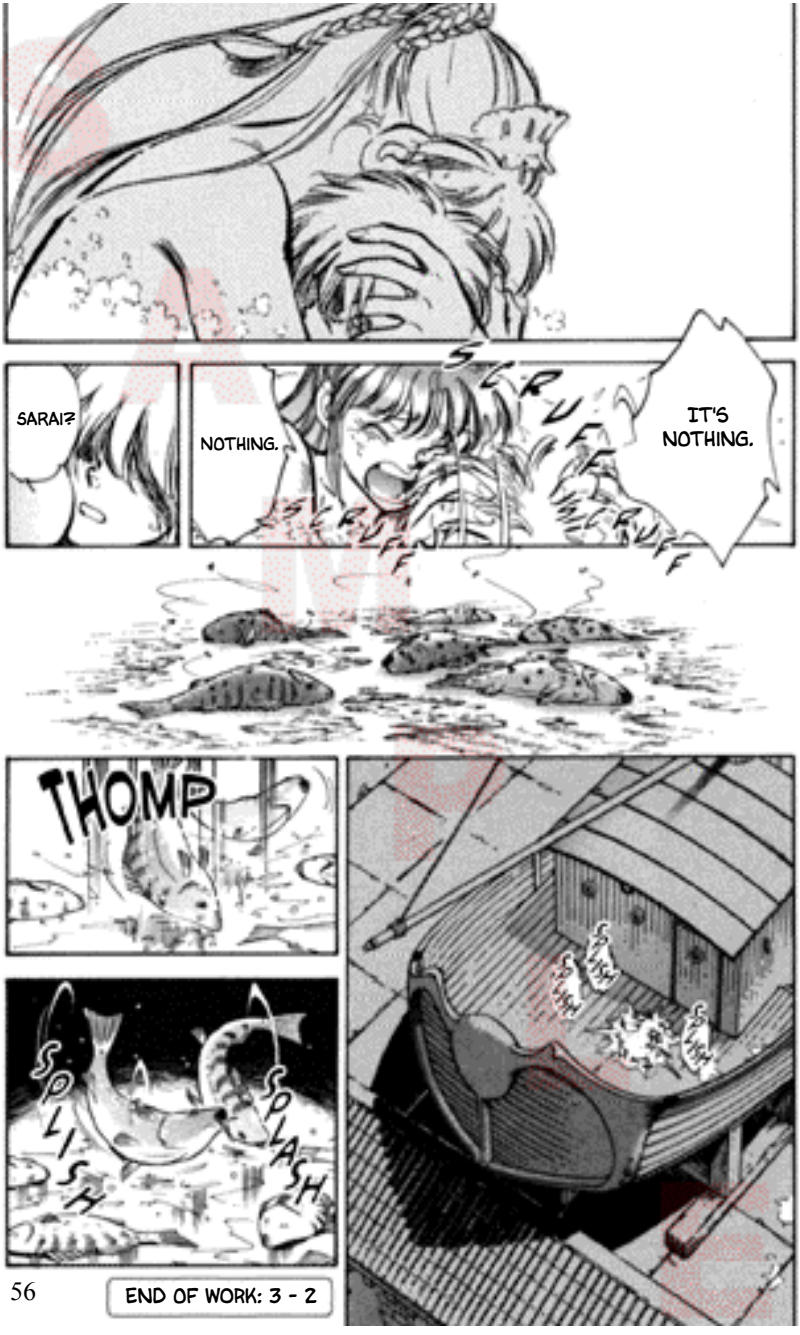
JU...
JUST A MINUTE, PAOLO ....?!

MY MOM'S BODY WAS FULL OF SCARS---
BECAUSE PERETTI WAS ALWAYS OPERATING ON HER...
MOVE YOUR.... HANDS.

MOM'S BREASTS WERE HARD.
TOUCH
THEY HAD SO MANY SCARS.

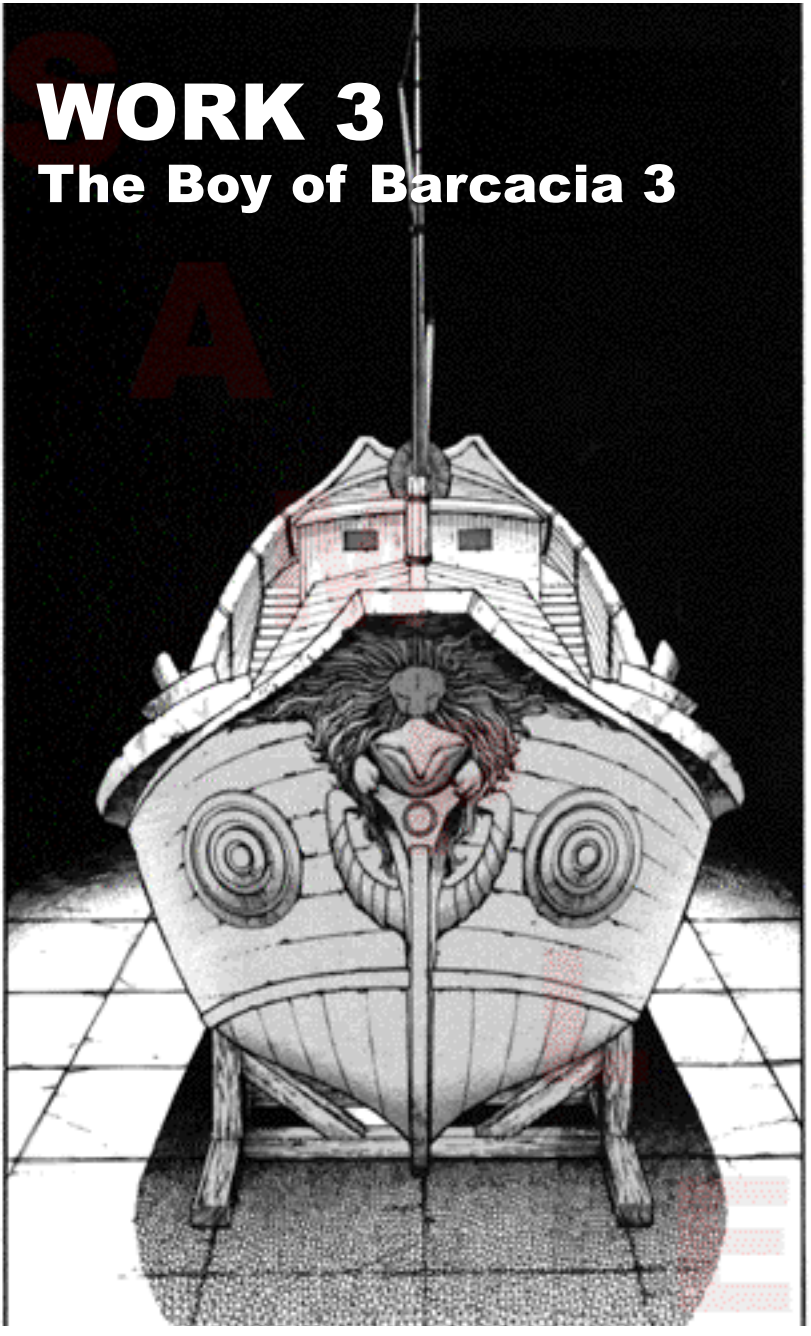
SHE MUST HAVE BEEN FIGHTING AGAINST HER CHANGING BODY BY REFORMING IT WITH PLASTIC SURGERY.

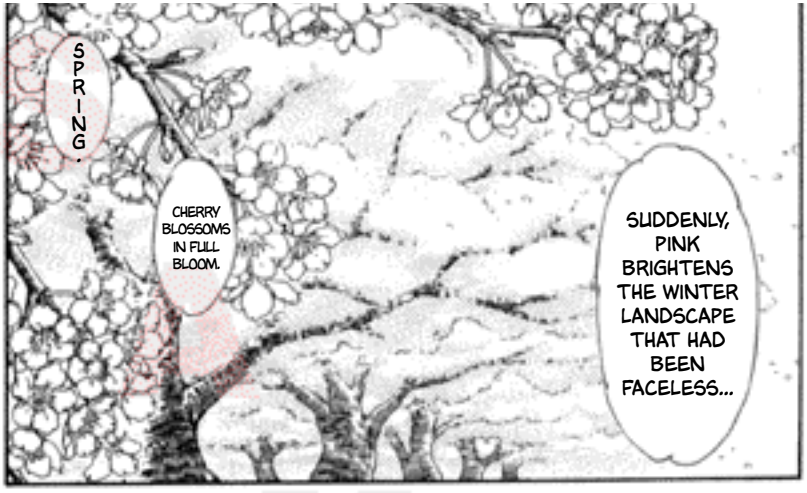
IN THE END, SHE WOULDN'T TAKE A BATH WITH ME ANYMORE.



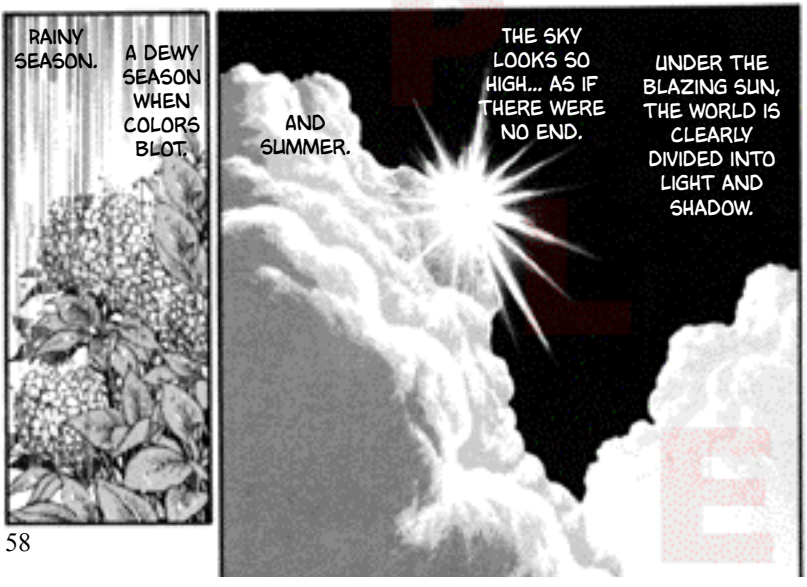
END OF WORK: 3 - 2

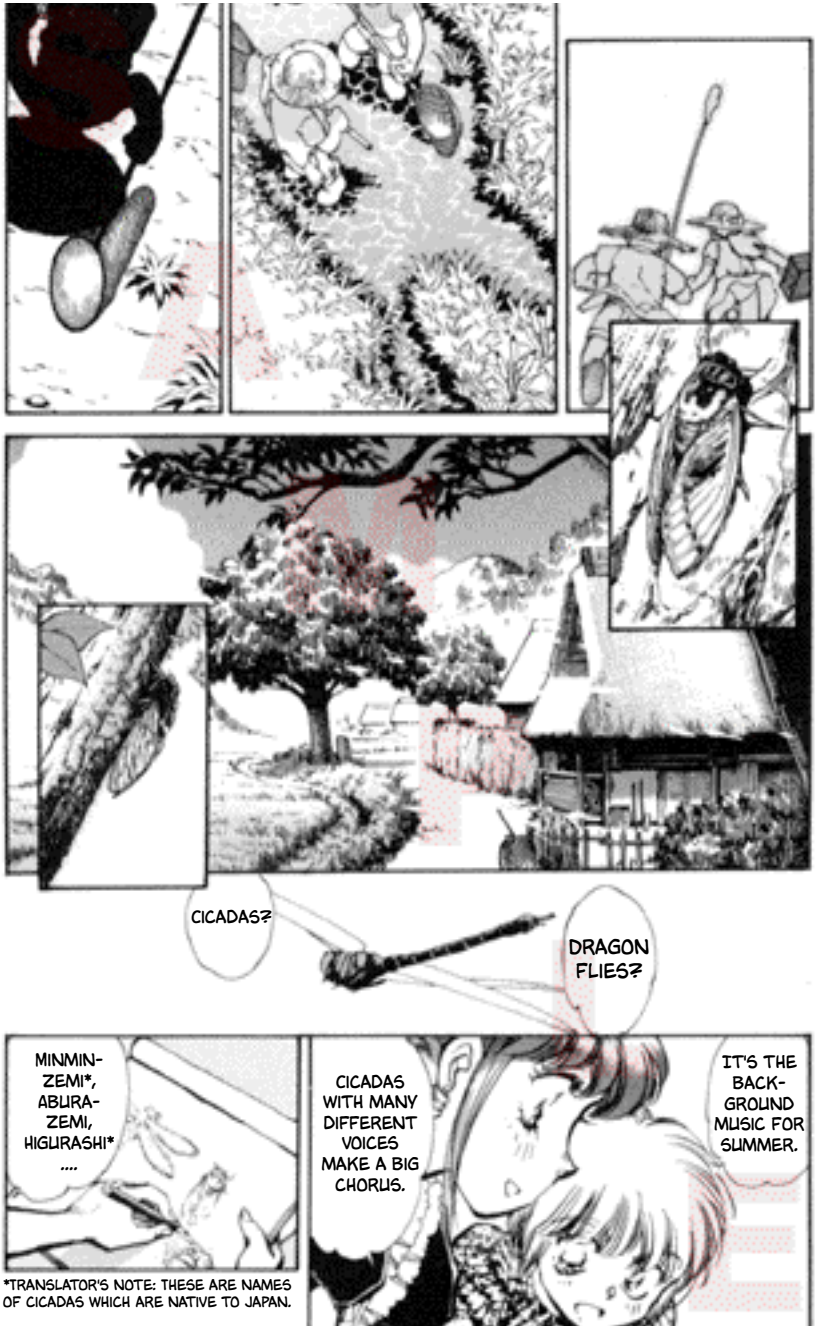
WORK 3
The Boy of Barcacia 3



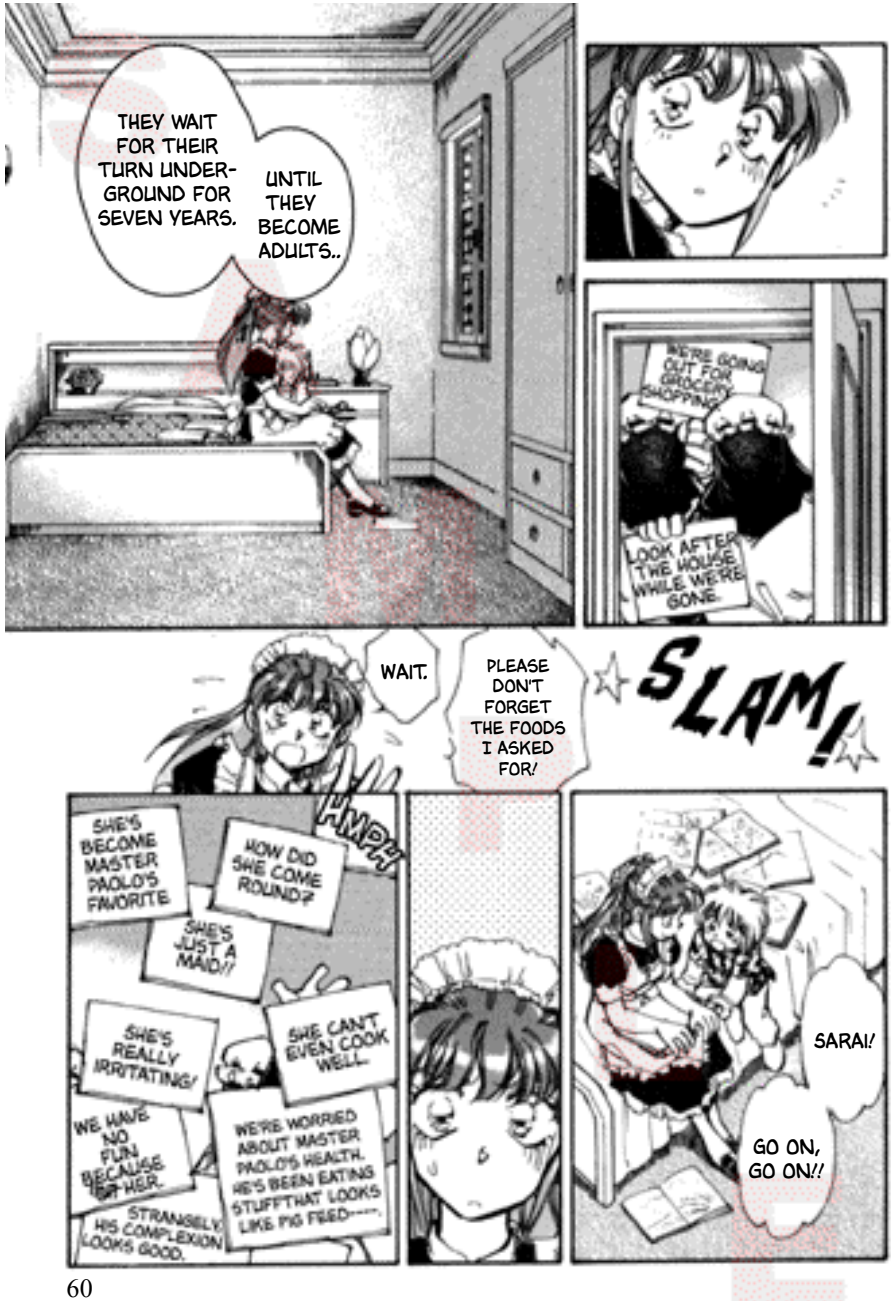

SPRING.
CHERRY BLOSSOMS IN FULL BLOOM.
SUDDENLY, PINK BRIGHTENS THE WINTER LANDSCAPE THAT HAD BEEN FACELESS...

SHINY FRESH GREEN.
NEW GREEN LEAVES COVER TREE BRANCHES, SHOWING THE SUNLIGHT THROUGH THEM.


RAINY SEASON.
A DEWY SEASON WHEN COLORS BLOT.
AND SUMMER.
THE SKY LOOKS SO HIGH... AS IF THERE WERE NO END.
UNDER THE BLAZING SUN, THE WORLD IS CLEARLY DIVIDED INTO LIGHT AND SHADOW.


CICADAS?
DRAGON FLIES?
MINMIN-ZEMI*, ABURA-ZEMI, HIGURASHI* ....
CICADAS WITH MANY DIFFERENT VOICES MAKE A BIG CHORUS.
IT'S THE BACK-GROUND MUSIC FOR SUMMER.

*TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: THESE ARE NAMES OF CICADAS WHICH ARE NATIVE TO JAPAN.

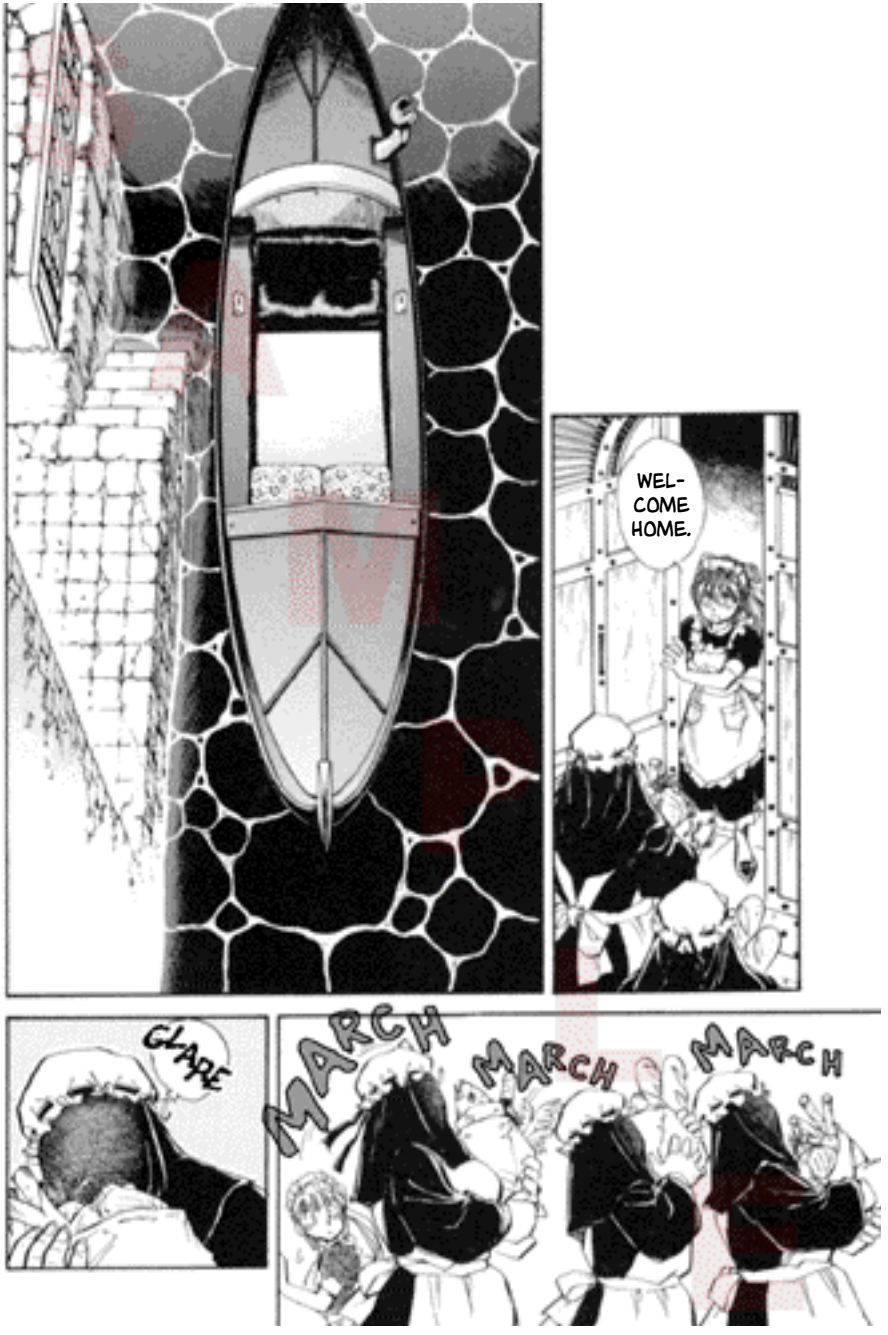

THEY WAIT FOR THEIR TURN UNDER-GROUND FOR SEVEN YEARS.
UNTIL THEY BECOME ADULTS..
WE'RE GOING OUT FOR GROCERY SHOPPING!
LOOK AFTER THE HOUSE WHILE WE'RE GONE.
WAIT.
PLEASE DON'T FORGET THE FOODS I ASKED FOR!
SLAM!
HMPH
SHE'S BECOME MASTER PAOLO'S FAVORITE
HOW DID SHE COME ROUND?
SHE'S JUST A MAID!!
SHE'S REALLY IRRITATING!
SHE CAN'T EVEN COOK WELL.
WE HAVE NO FUN BECAUSE OF HER.
WE'RE WORRIED ABOUT MASTER PAOLO'S HEALTH. HE'S BEEN EATING STUFF THAT LOOKS LIKE PIG FEED----.
STRANGELY, HIS COMPLEXION LOOKS GOOD.
SARA!/
GO ON, GO ON!!

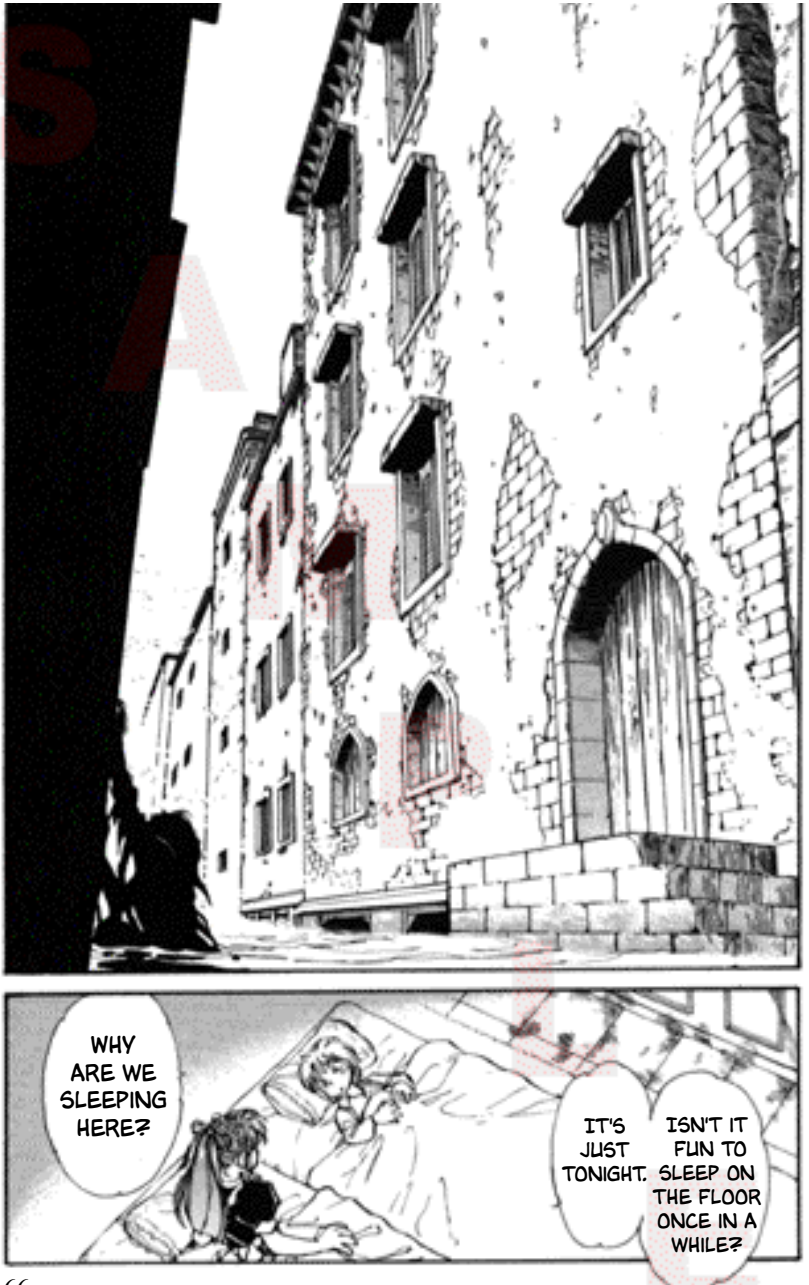
PAOLO BECAME ABSORBED IN MY STORIES.
WITH HIS SHINING EYES, HE ASKED ME MANY QUESTIONS
ESPECIALLY ABOUT MY OWN COUNTRY.
AND THEN?
AND THEN?
WHAT'S AFTER SUMMER?
I GUESS IT'S NO WONDER.
SINCE HE WAS BORN, HIS WORLD WAS THE INSIDE OF THIS MANSION.
WHEN SUMMER ----
--LEAVES ON TREES BECOME YELLOW AND RED,
THE WOODS AND FORESTS ARE TINTED WITH BURNING SHADES.
LATER, THOSE LEAVES FALL AND---
--WINTER COMES
FROM THE SKY ---
--A WHITE, SOFT AND COLD THING FALLS.

THE WORLD IS SIMPLY WHITE WITH SNOW THAT LIES THICK ON THE GROUND.
IT'S A SILENT AND FANTASTIC WORLD.
SNOW!
THIS IS A SNOW CRYSTAL.
IT'S A HEXAGON ...
THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT SHAPES.
SNOW REFLECTS THE WINTER SUNLIGHT
AND IT SPARKLES LIKE JEWELRY.
YOU JUST HAVE TO BE PATIENT A LITTLE LONGER, PAOLO.
IF YOU WAIT FOR A LITTLE OVER TWO MONTHS,
YOU CAN GO OUT AND SEE MANY THINGS!

--LEAVE WHEN THAT TIME COMES,
WON'T YOU.....?
SARAI, YOU'LL ---
TH--
THAT'S RIGHT.
BEFORE I LEAVE,
YOU WANNA GO SOME-WHERE TOGETH-ER?
CARRY-ING A LUNCH BOX?
REALLY?!
REALLY?!
PROMISE?
YOU PROMISE?!
EEE
PAOLO ....
JU...
JUST A MINUTE, PAOLO.
AAAAH

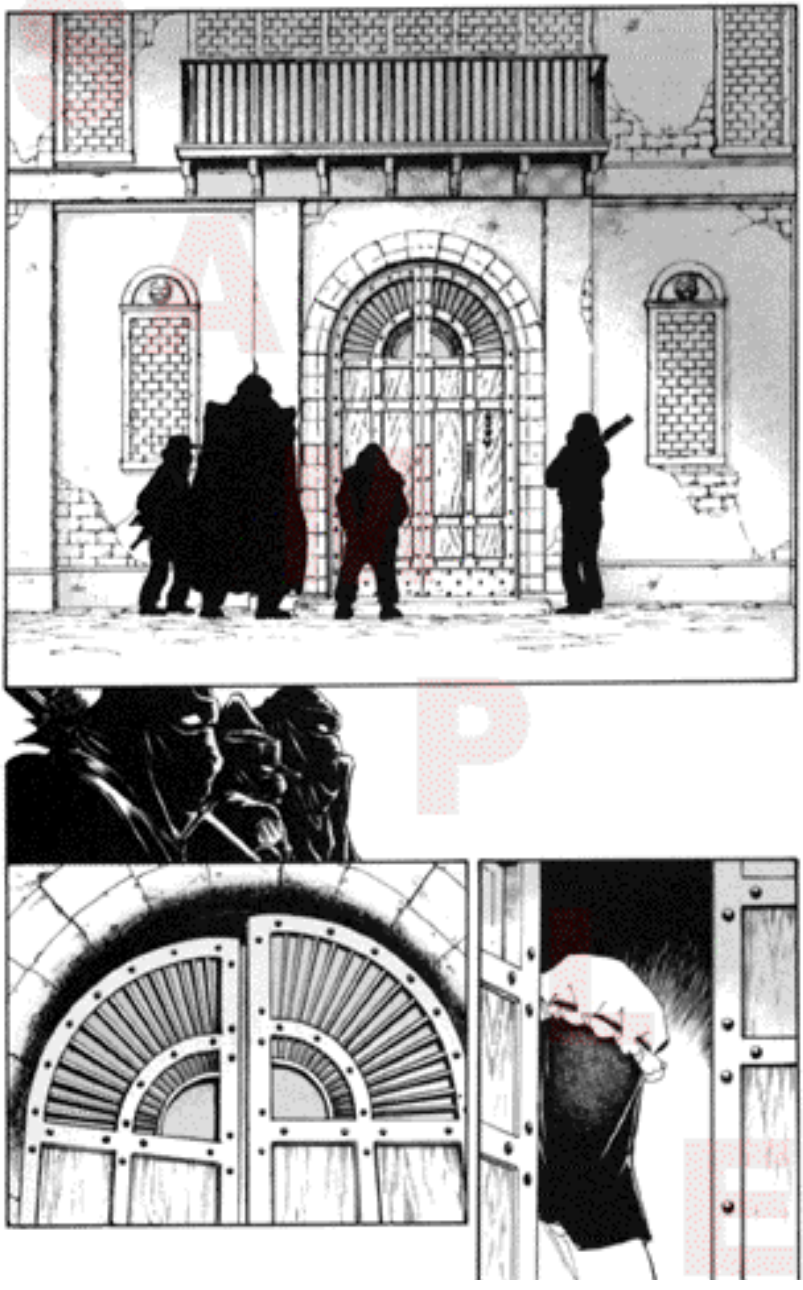
I TOLD YOU MY HOME COUNTRY DISAPEARED MANY YEARS AGO.
STOP BEING UNREA-SON-ABLE!
YOU WANNA GO TO JAPAN?
BUT SARAI ---
YOU CHASED DRAGON-FLIES AND CAUGHT CRAWFISH IN THE STREAMS, DIDN'T YOU?
WAS THAT A LIE?
I DIDN'T ---
LIE.....


WEL-
COME
HOME.
GLARE
MARCH
MARCH
MARCH


WHY ARE WE SLEEPING HERE?
IT'S JUST TONIGHT.
ISN'T IT FUN TO SLEEP ON THE FLOOR ONCE IN A WHILE?

?
?
EVEN IF YOU HAVE A SCARY DREAM ---
YOUR MOM WILL BE HERE WITH YOU.
MEOWWWWWW

SKWEEK



DON'T SCREW IT UP.
OUR TARGET IS THE FORMER MAYOR'S CHILD
HE'S THE LAST PRIZED GAME IN TOWN.
THERE'S ONLY ONE GUARD.

HMPH. A BAT-TLE MAID OR WHATEVER SHE IS----
JUST ONE GIRL CAN'T FIGHT AGAINST BLACK MANBA.
BAM
WHAT DO YOU NEED?
SO LATE AT NIGHT.

FWIP
?
WHAT'S WRONG? SHOOT!!.

SARAI?!
DOMP!
RUMBLE RUMBLE RUMBLE
FLOP

TAT TAT
ARRGH
GYAK
RAT
TAT TAT
TAT
SARA!!
THEY'RE NOT MAIDS!!
INSIDE ARE THE VULTURES FROM AN ARMED KIDNAPPING GROUP.

HOW MANY TIMES DO YOU NEED TO FAIL, TO UNDER-STAND?
BECAUSE OF YOU, THE ENTIRE TEAM WAS PUT IN DANGER.
YOUR SLIGHT HESITATION COULD WIPE OUT EVERYTHING.
IF YOU'RE IN DANGER, KILL THEM BEFORE *YOU* GET KILLED!!
THAT'S YOUR WEAKEST POINT.
YOU'D RATHER NOT KILL IF YOU DON'T HAVE TO?
THAT'S JUST PRETEN-TIOUS SELF DECEPTION.
WHOEVER VISITS THIS MANSION...
.....IS ONLY AFTER PAOLO.

END OF WORK: 3 - 3

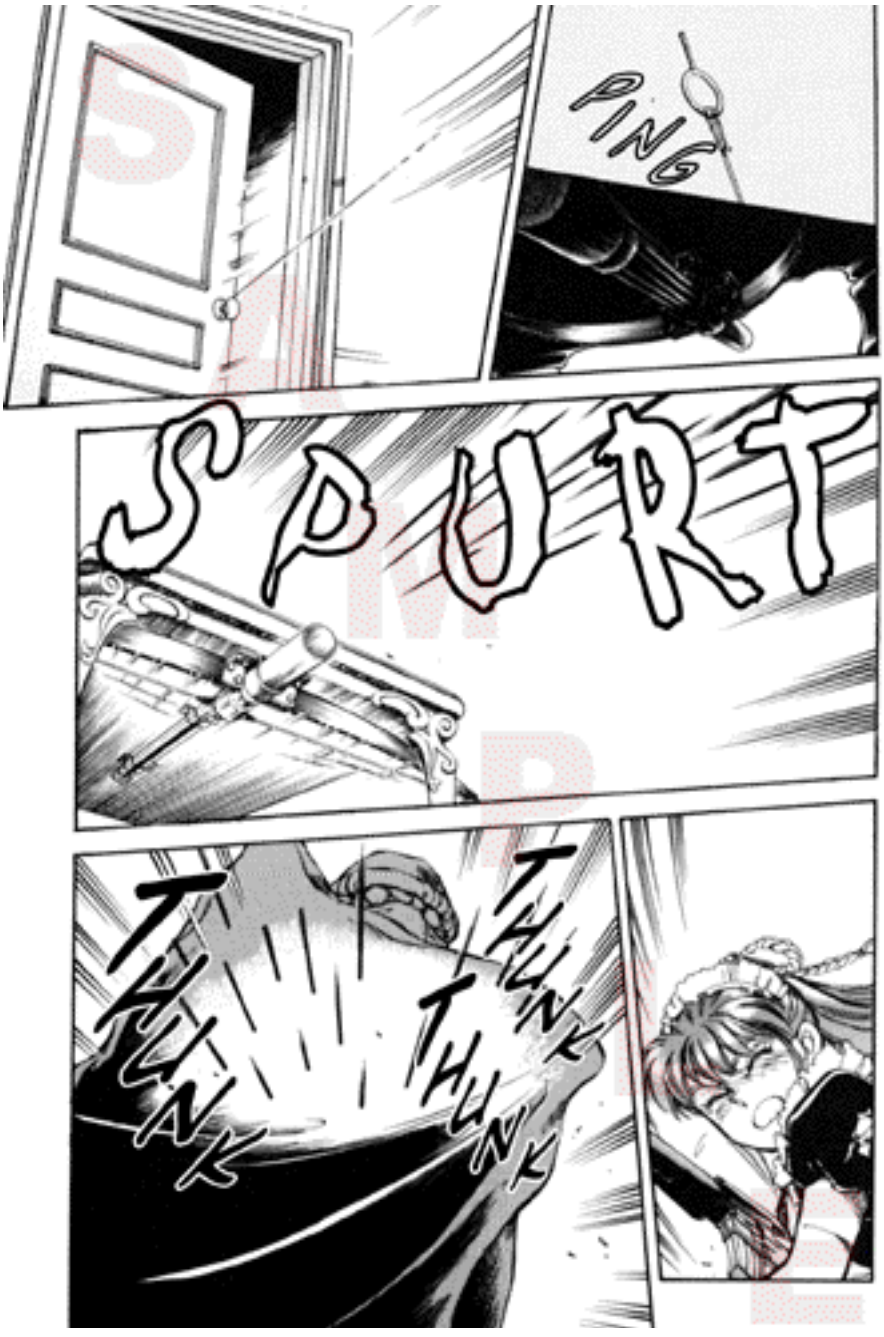
WORK 3
The Boy of Barcacia 4

BLAM
BLAM BLAM
AAAAAAAH

ARE YOU FOR REAL?!
HE KNOWS PAOLO'S HERE, DOESN'T HE?!
HEE HEE
GO ON, PANIC.
BLAM BLAM BLAM
PANT PANT
HOW CAN HE SHOOT SO ACCURATELY?!
SORRY, PAOLO.
PANT
FWAP

HM?
EITHER HE'S USING SOMETHING LIKE A HEAT SENSOR FROM THE OLD WORLD OR----
--HE MUST HAVE A CLAIRVOYANT EXTRA-SENSOR.
CLICK
O--
SHIT!
SHE HID THE KID IN HER SKIRT?!
ARGH
RRRR

A STUN GRENADE!!
WOOSH


PING
SPURT
THUNK
THUNK
THUNK
THUNK

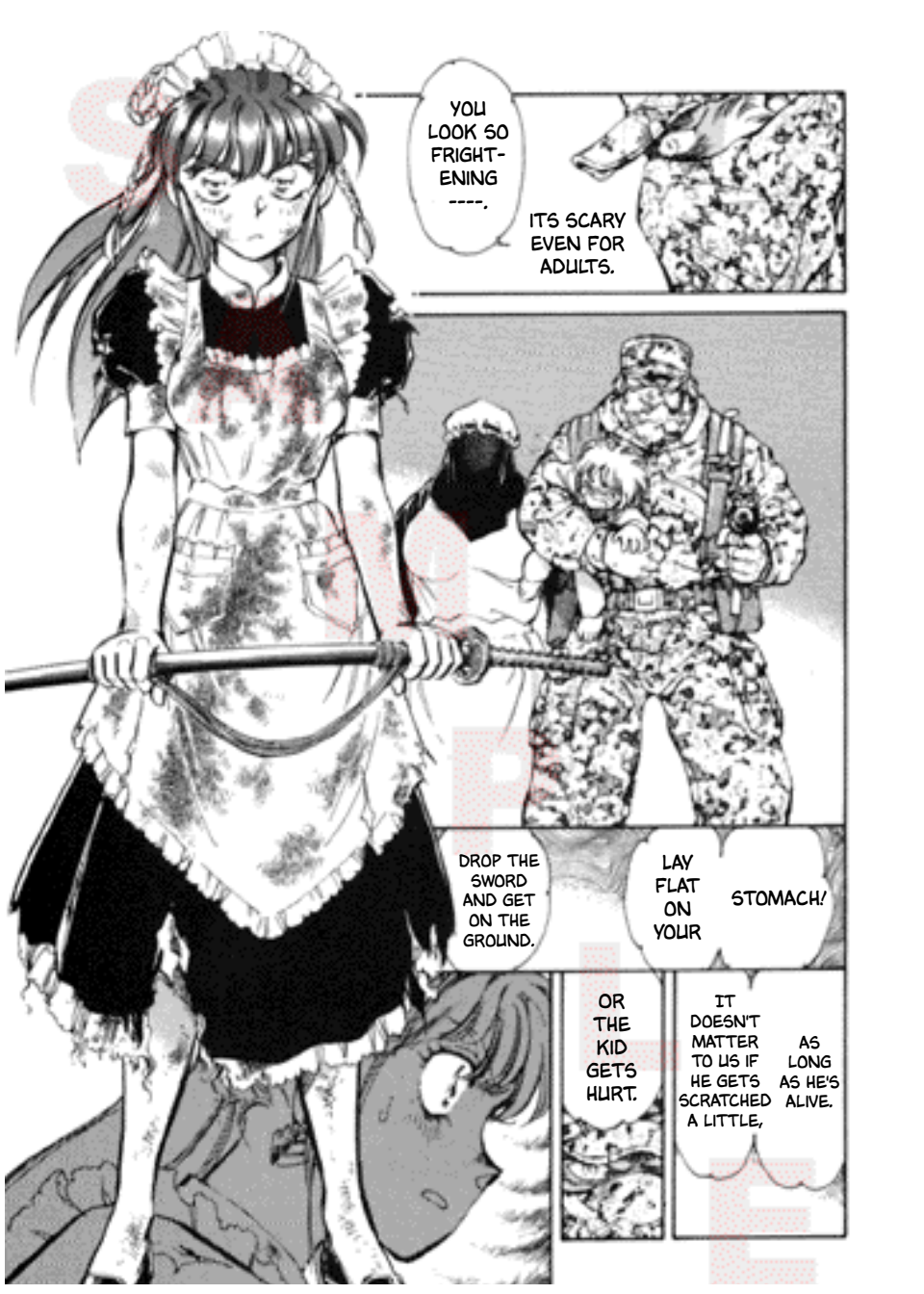
FWD
AAAH
FWD

SQUEEZE
FWIP
SNAP
KLANG
UGG--
A---

BUMP
A WOMAN ---
FWAP
A NORMAL WOMAN ---
SARAAAAI!
SLICE!

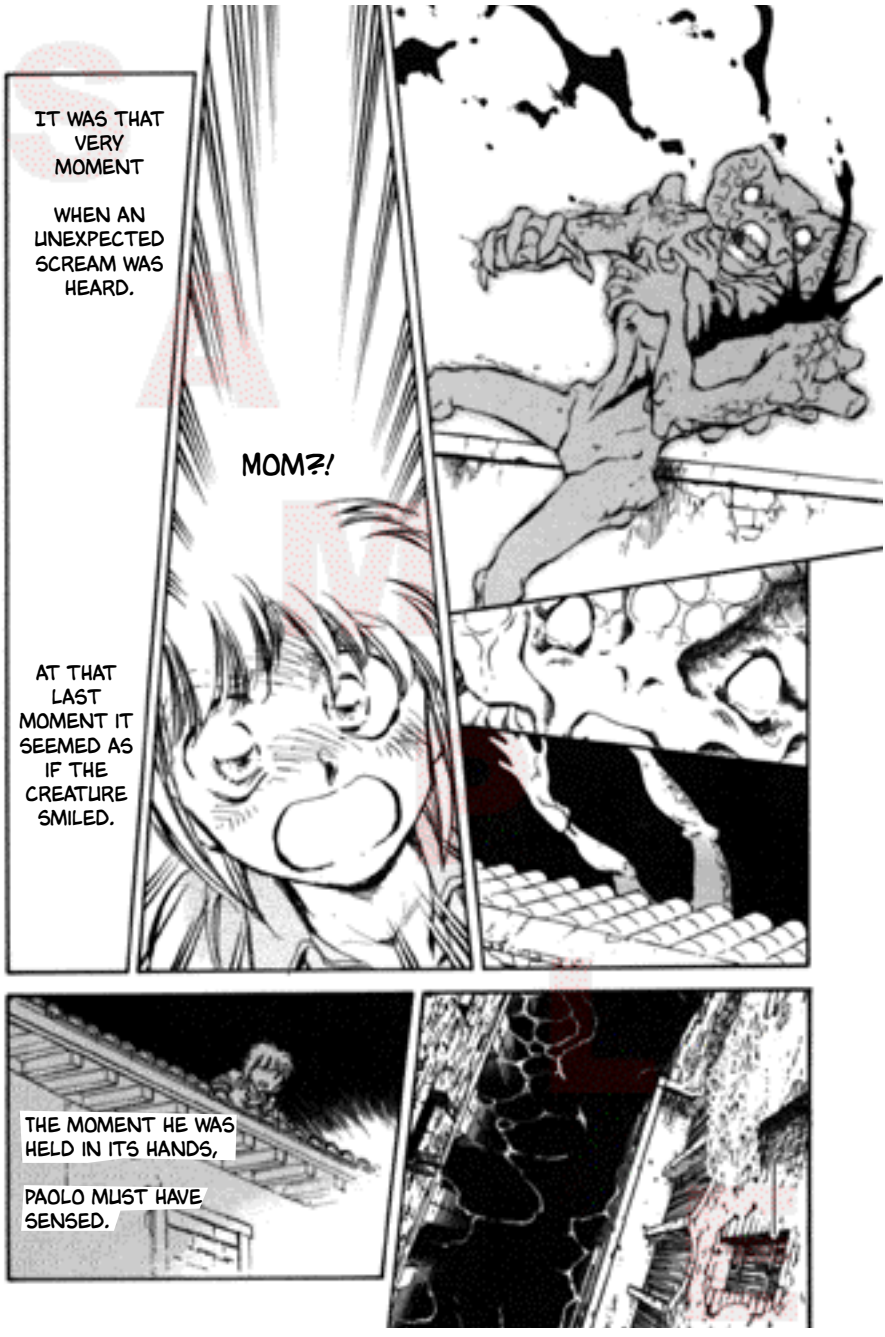
SA--
--RAI
---?!

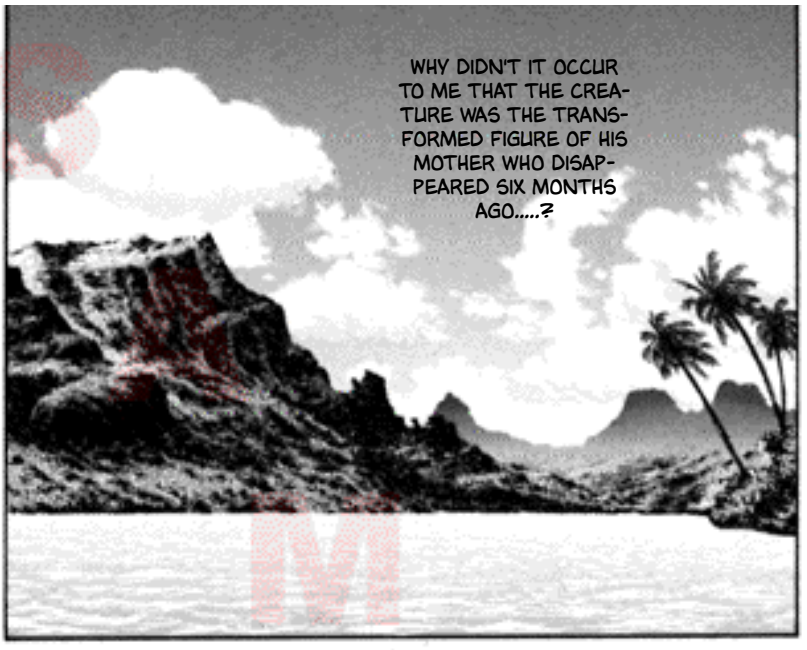
DON'T JUMP OUT, PAOLO !!
I'LL GO OUT FIRST!!
PAOLO!!
WAAA!
IT'S GAME OVER.
GUARD MAID.

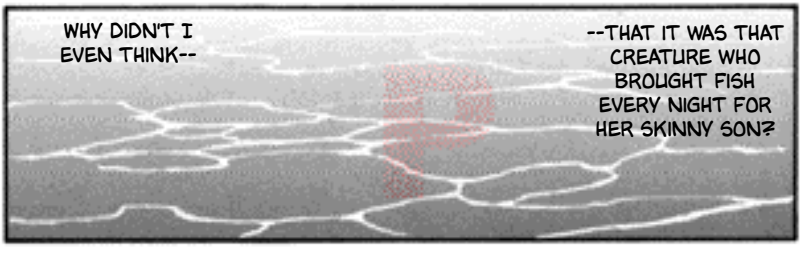

YOU LOOK SO FRIGHT-ENING ----.
ITS SCARY EVEN FOR ADULTS.
DROP THE SWORD AND GET ON THE GROUND.
LAY FLAT ON YOUR STOMACH!
OR THE KID GETS HURT.
IT DOESN'T MATTER TO US IF HE GETS SCRATCHED A LITTLE,
AS LONG AS HE'S ALIVE.

YOU WANT ME TO CARVE OUT ONE OF HIS EYE-BALLS?
AAA AAA AAH
STOP IT!!
I'LL DO AS YOU SAY!!
I HEAR YOU'RE PURE JAPANESE, GUARD MAID.
AN UNEX-PECTED CATCH FOR TONIGHT.
SLAP
SMACK
OHHH!

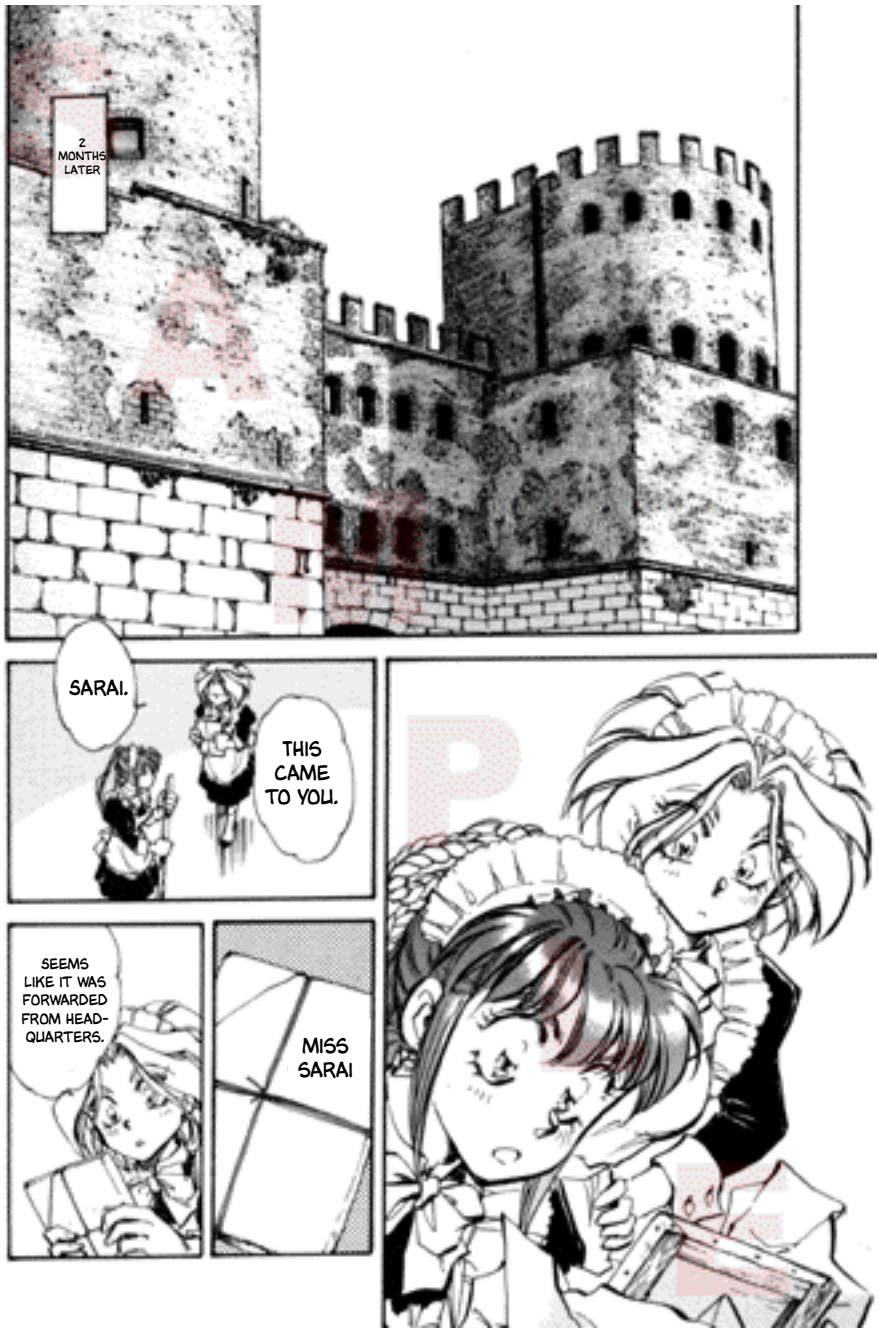
A CREATURE FROM UNDER WATER.
THE MOMENT SHE SAW THAT GROTESQUE FIGURE, MY GUARD MAID'S BODY REACTED.
THERE WASN'T EVEN TIME FOR THE BLINK OF AN EYE.

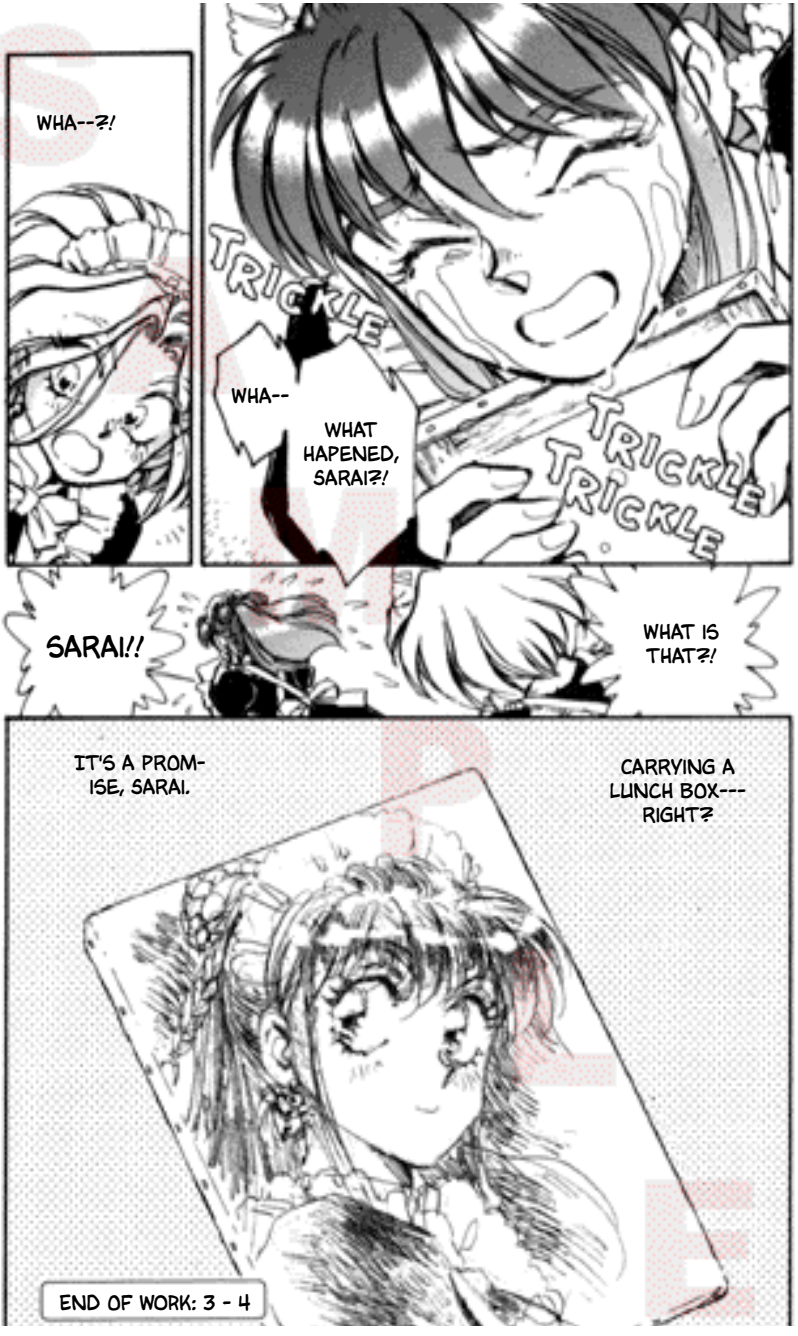

IT WAS THAT VERY MOMENT
WHEN AN UNEXPECTED SCREAM WAS HEARD.
MOM?!
AT THAT LAST MOMENT IT SEEMED AS IF THE CREATURE SMILED.
THE MOMENT HE WAS HELD IN ITS HANDS,
PAOLO MUST HAVE SENSED.


WHY DIDN'T IT OCCUR TO ME THAT THE CREATURE WAS THE TRANSFORMED FIGURE OF HIS MOTHER WHO DISAPPEARED SIX MONTHS AGO.....?


WHY DIDN'T I EVEN THINK--
--THAT IT WAS THAT CREATURE WHO BROUGHT FISH EVERY NIGHT FOR HER SKINNY SON?

PAOLO'S SHOCK WAS SO DEEP---
---THAT I HAD TO ASK FOR MY REPLACEMENT AND I LEFT MY POSITION AS PAOLO'S GUARD.
YOU!RE IMPOSSIBLE.
YOU CAN'T EVEN BABY-SIT SATISFACTORY.
HE DIDN'T EVEN SAY GOODBYE TO ME.


2 MONTHS LATER
SARAI.
THIS CAME TO YOU.
SEEMS LIKE IT WAS FORWARDED FROM HEAD-QUARTERS.
MISS SARAI


WHA--?!
TRICKLE
WHA--
WHAT HAPENED, SARAI?!
TRICKLE
TRICKLE
TRICKLE
SARAI!!
WHAT IS THAT?!
IT'S A PROM-ISE, SARAI.
CARRYING A LUNCH BOX--- RIGHT?
END OF WORK: 3 - 4

WORK 4

The Dark Flower 1

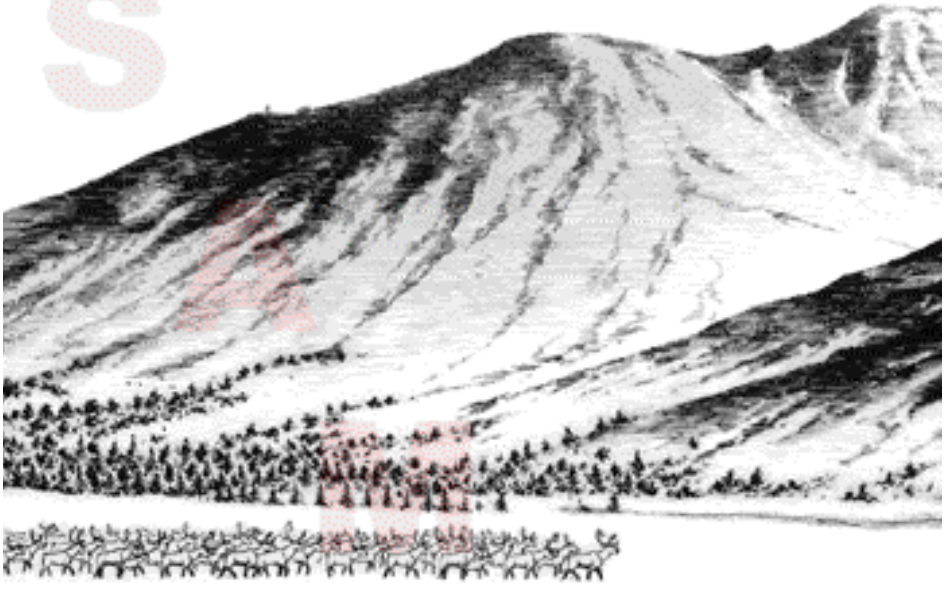
THE NORTHLAND VILLAGE, "JISCOOL*."

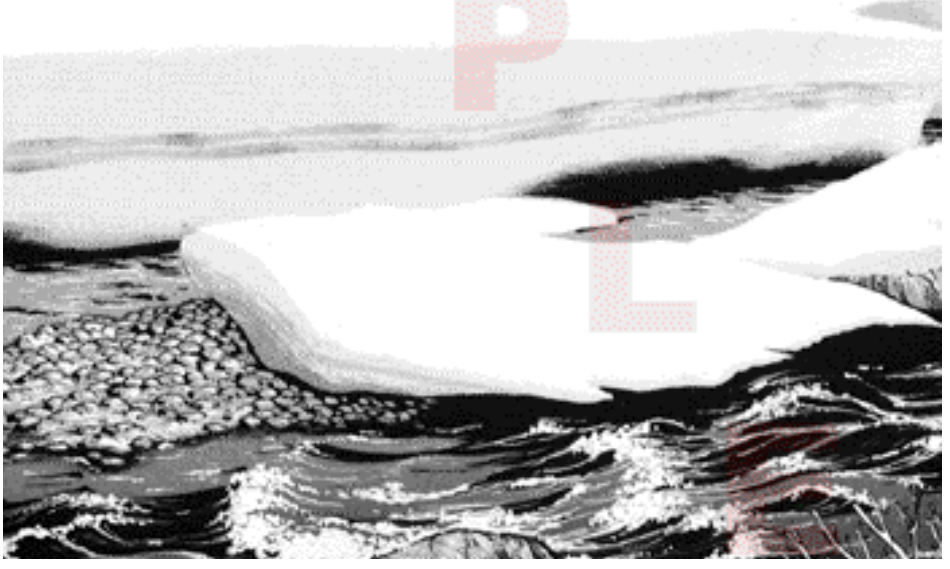
AN UGLY GIRL POSESSED MYSTERIOUS POWERS AND SHE HEARD THE VOICES OF SPIRITS *.

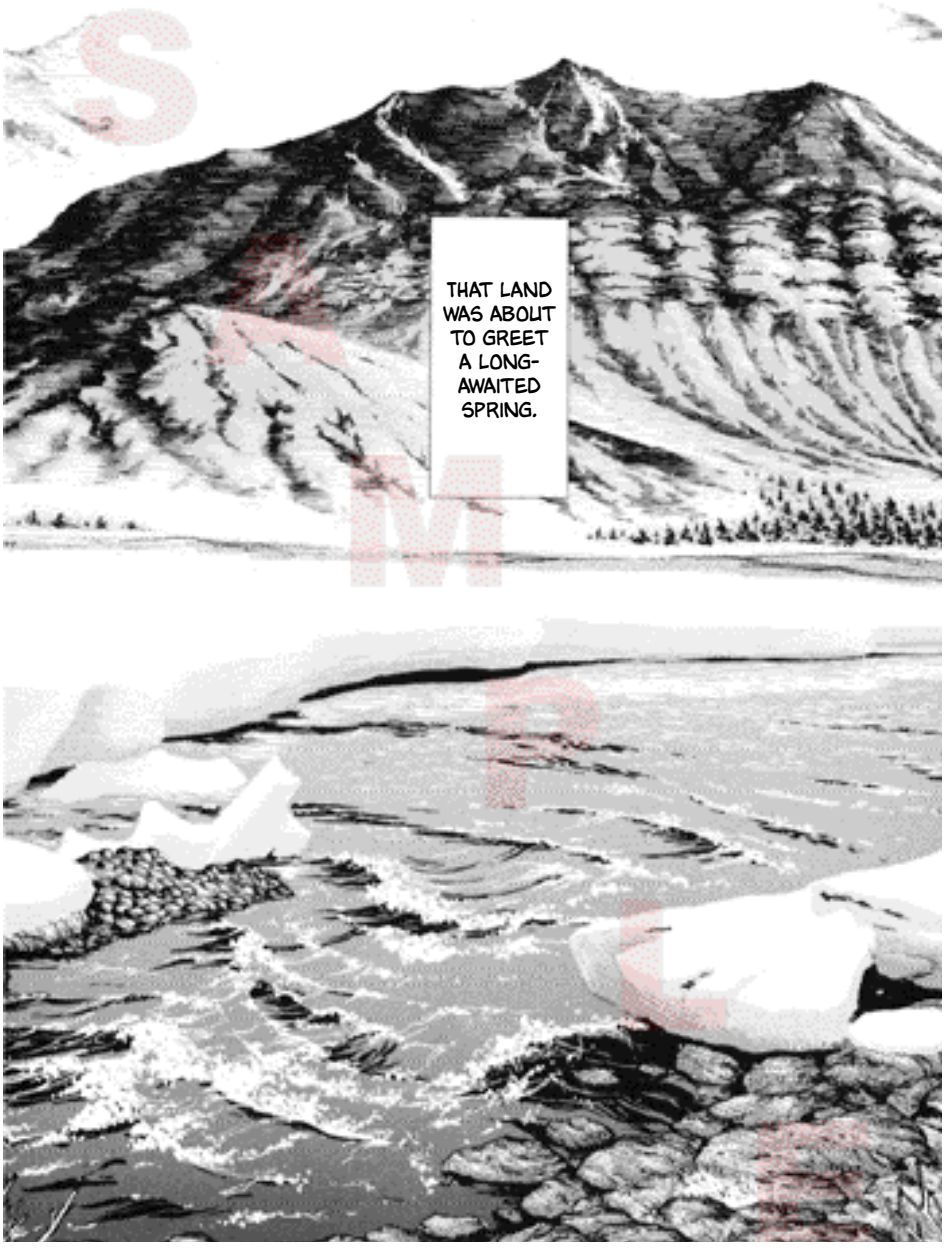
THE GIRL WAS DESPISED AS A DEVIL'S CHILD--

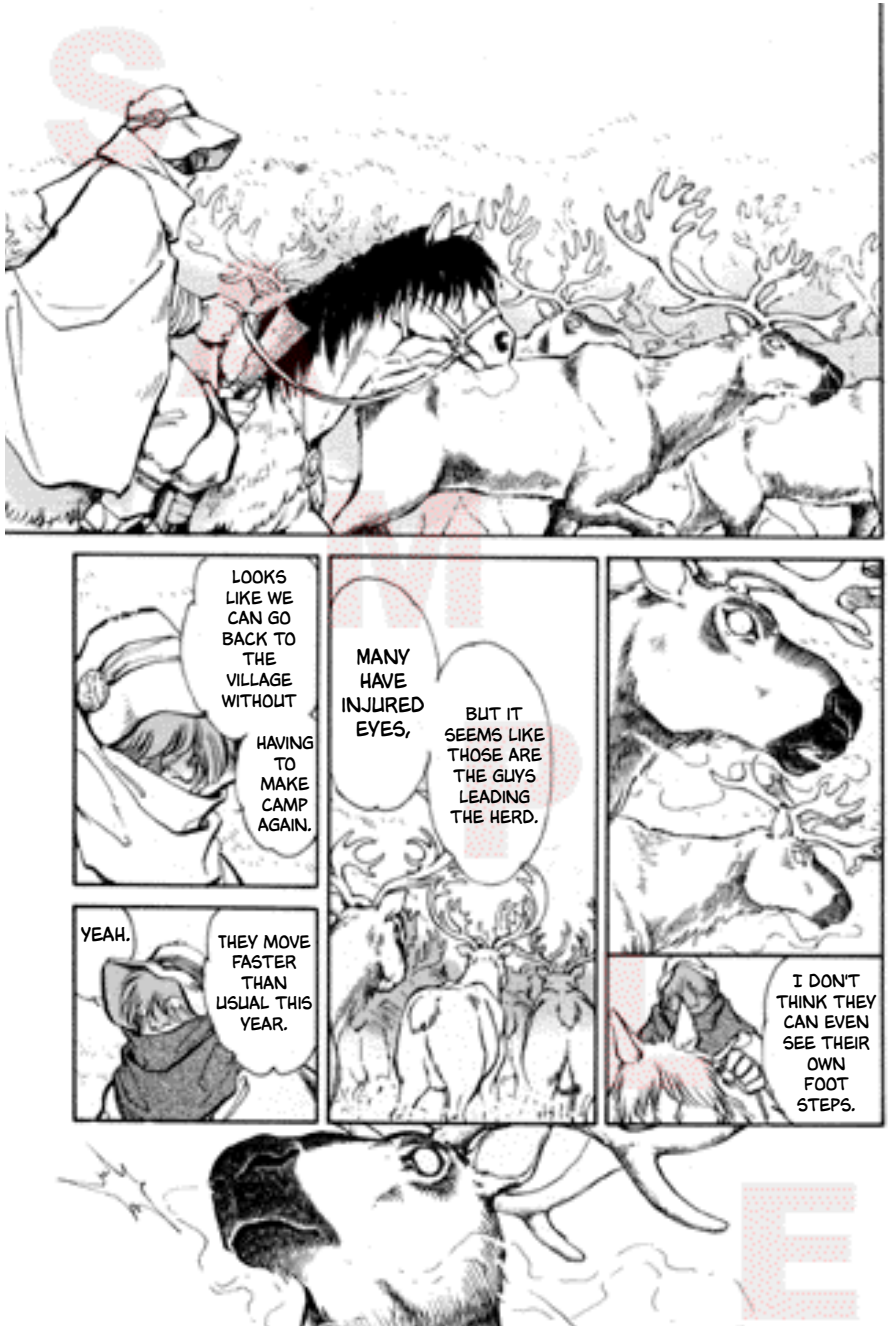
--AND FEARED AS A SHAMAN FOR DIVINE REVELATIONS *.

* FOOTNOTE: SPIRITS---SPIRITS OF MOUNTAINS AND RIVERS
DIVINE REVELATIONS---MESSAGES FROM GOD

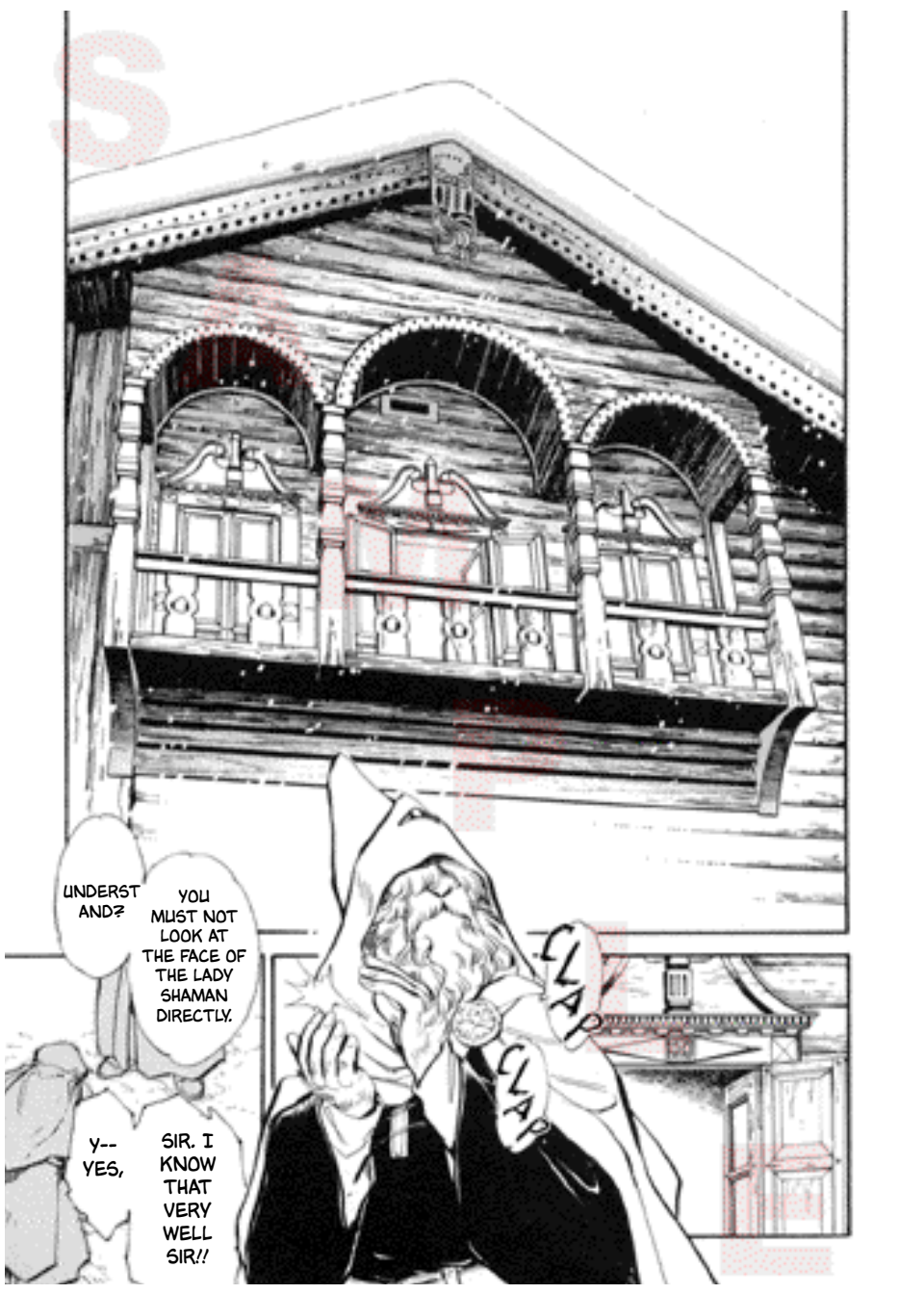


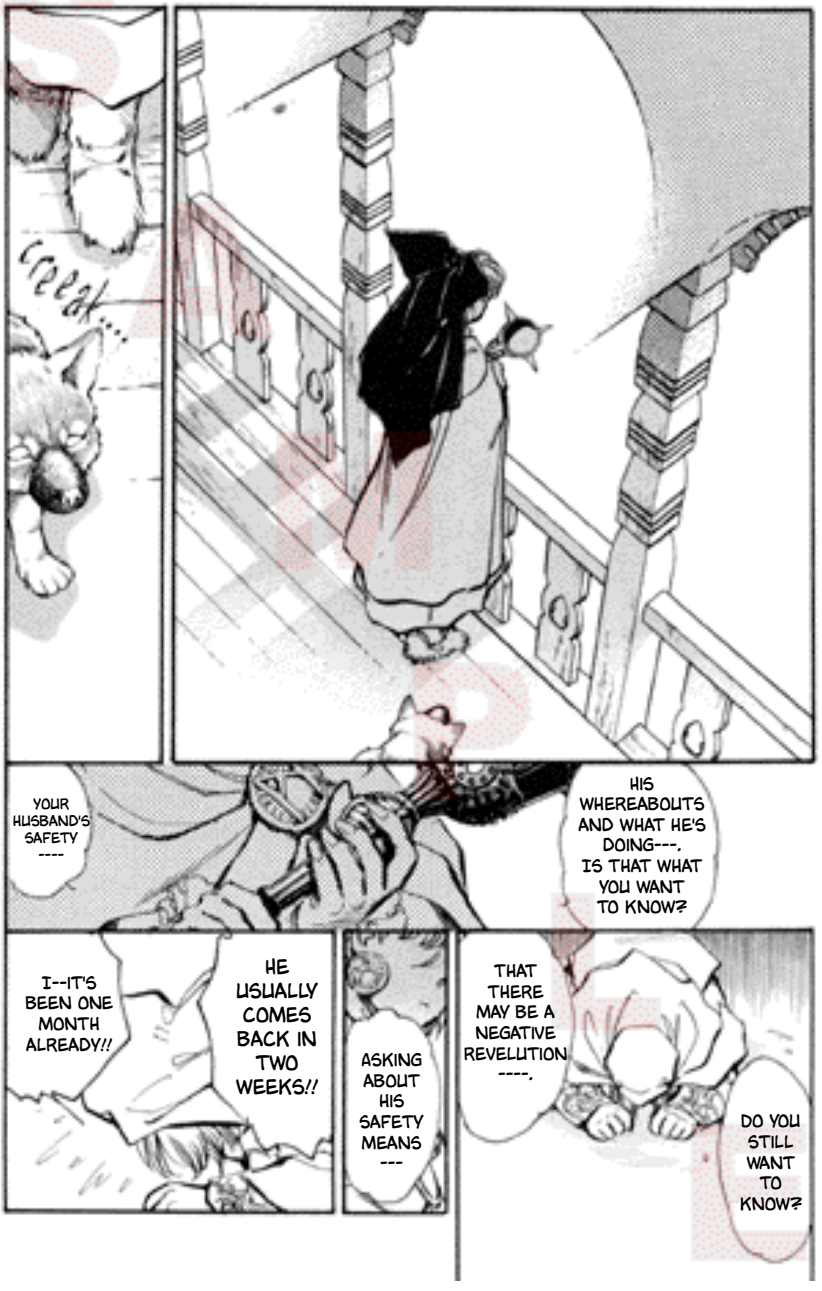



THAT LAND WAS ABOUT TO GREET A LONG-AWAITED SPRING.


LOOKS LIKE WE CAN GO BACK TO THE VILLAGE WITHOUT HAVING TO MAKE CAMP AGAIN.
YEAH.
THEY MOVE FASTER THAN USUAL THIS YEAR.
MANY HAVE INJURED EYES,
BUT IT SEEMS LIKE THOSE ARE THE GUYS LEADING THE HERD.
I DON'T THINK THEY CAN EVEN SEE THEIR OWN FOOT STEPS.

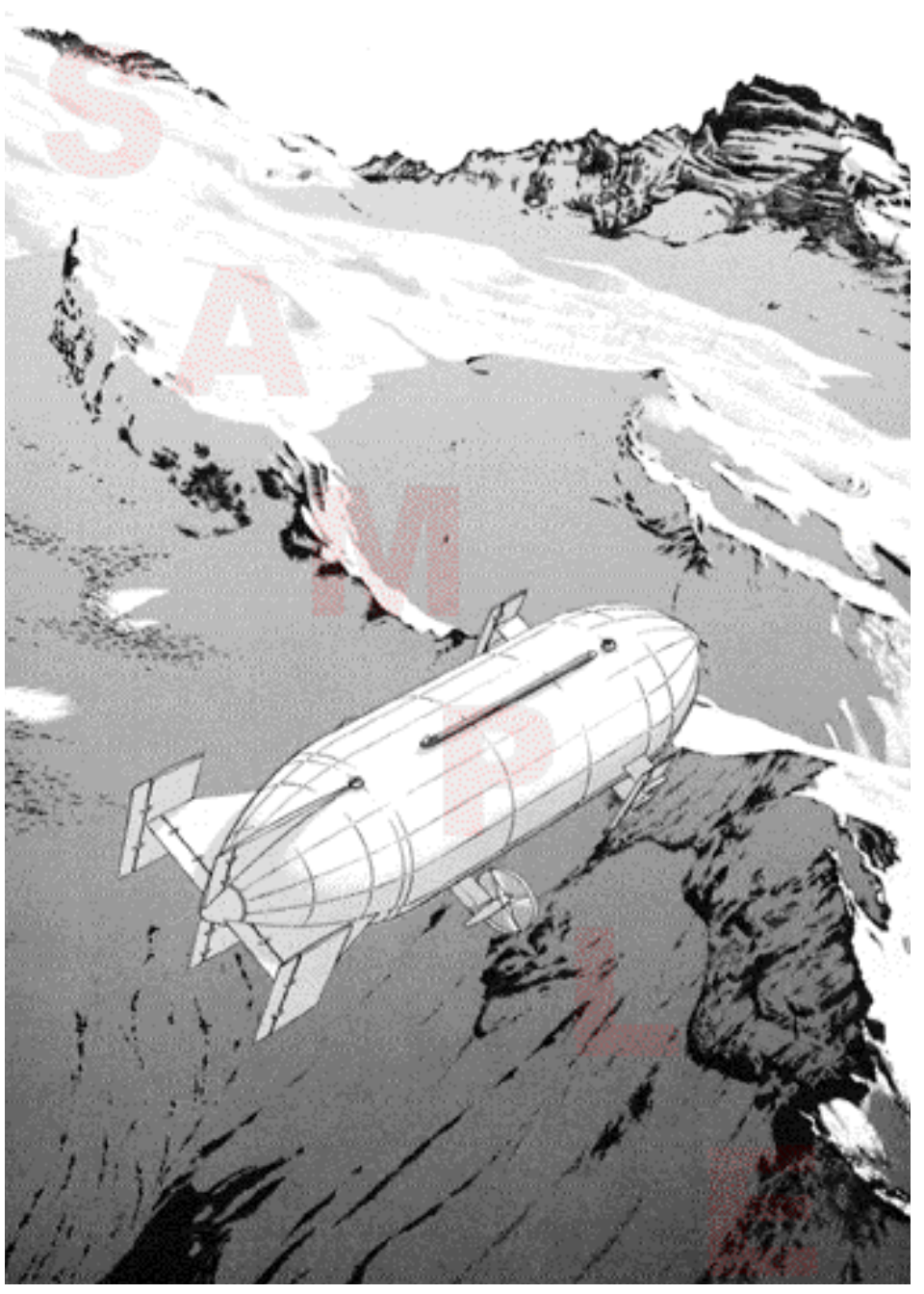
?
WHA---
WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?
GAMZA!!
WHOA.
THIS--
--THIS LOOKS BAD!!

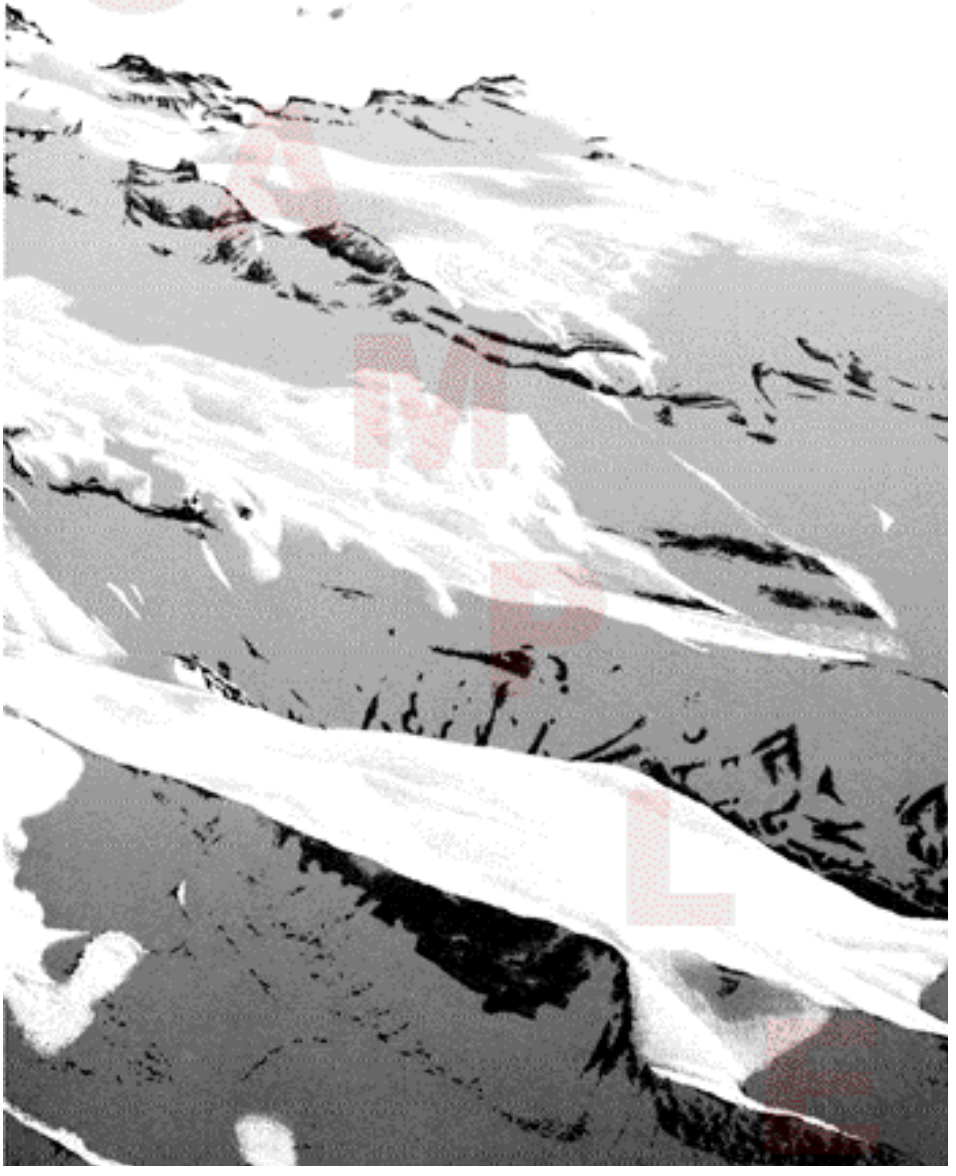

UNDERSTAND?
YOU MUST NOT LOOK AT THE FACE OF THE LADY SHAMAN DIRECTLY.
Y-- YES, SIR. I KNOW THAT VERY WELL SIR!!
CLAP
CLAP

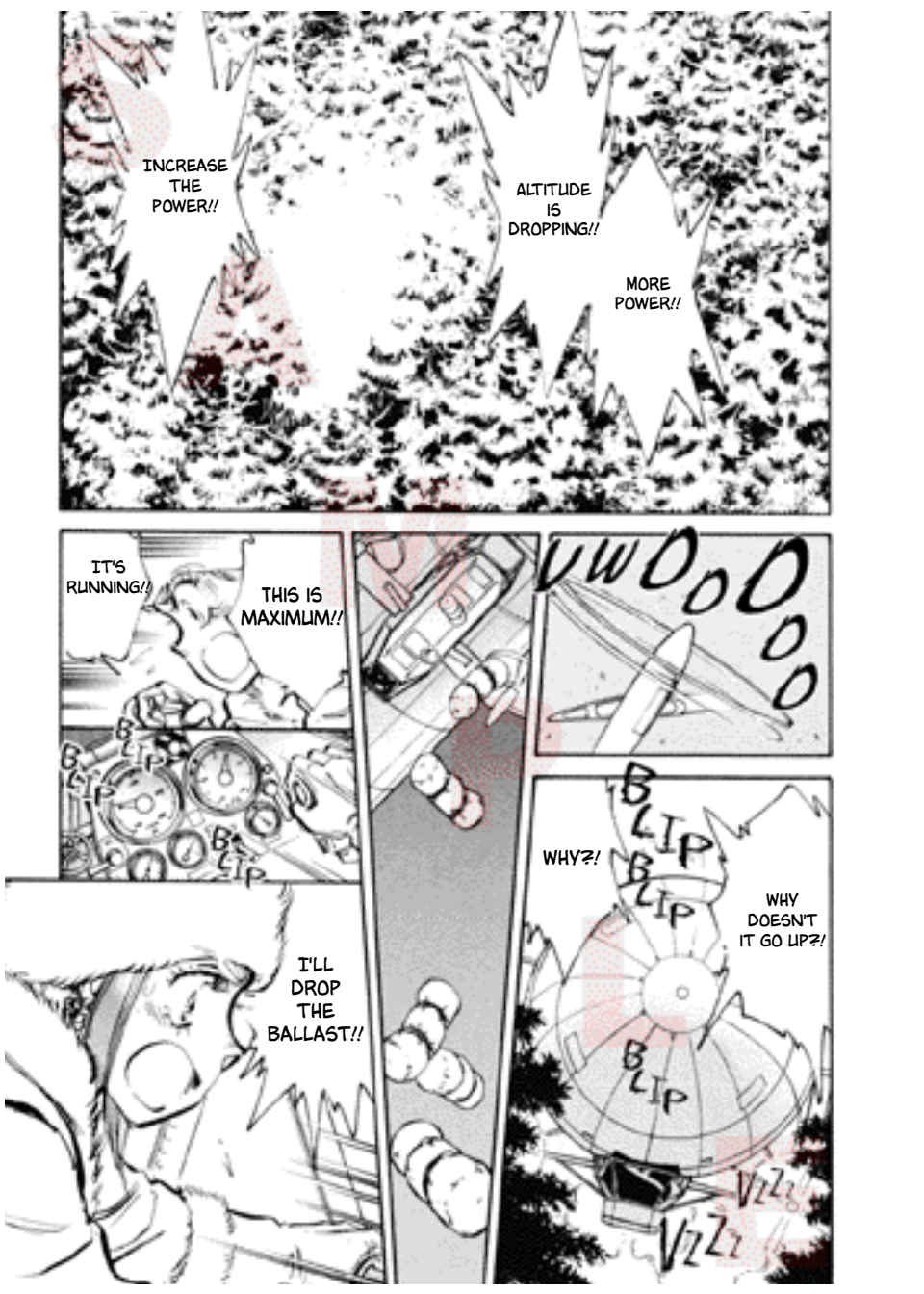

creak....
YOUR HUSBAND'S SAFETY ----
HIS WHEREABOUTS AND WHAT HE'S DOING---. IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT TO KNOW?
I--IT'S BEEN ONE MONTH ALREADY!!
HE USUALLY COMES BACK IN TWO WEEKS!!
ASKING ABOUT HIS SAFETY MEANS ---
THAT THERE MAY BE A NEGATIVE REVELUTION ----.
DO YOU STILL WANT TO KNOW?

SAILING PILE
MY HUSBAND IS A GOOD HUNTER, MISS CAPINO.
HE IS THE BEST HUNTER IN THIS VILLAGE AND---
---HE IS CALLED "THE FOREST RUNNER."
BUT NOW, HE HAS GONE HUNTING AND HASN'T COME BACK FOR A MONTH----.

MOUNTAINS, FORESTS, TREES ----
GRASSES, STONES AND SPIRITS THAT ARE ASLEEP UNDER THE SNOW-----
PLEASE TELL ME THE FATE OF THE HUNTER.
I'M SORRY, BUT ----
YOUR HUSBAND WILL NEVER COME BACK TO YOU AGAIN ----.



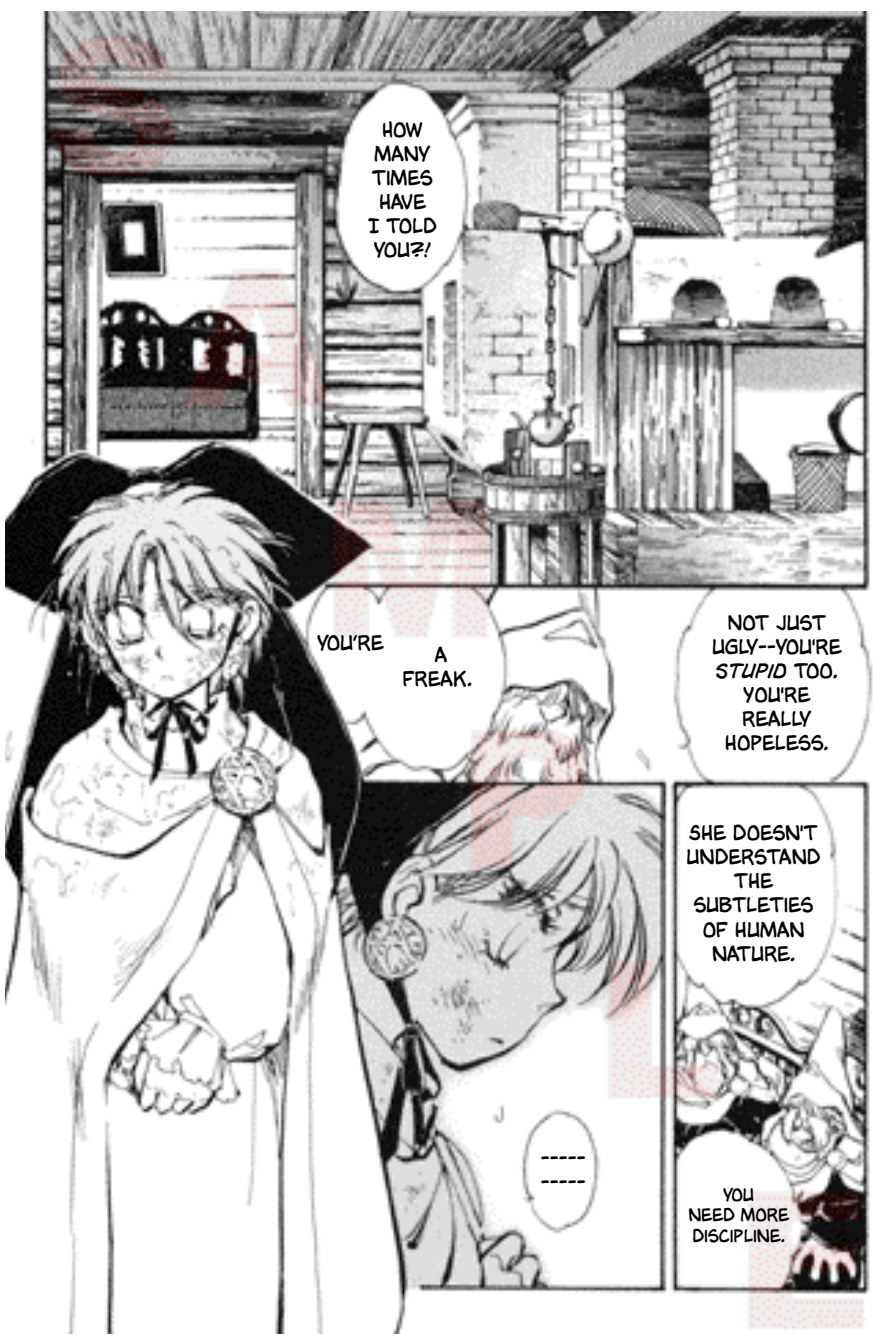



INCREASE THE POWER!!
ALTITUDE IS DROPPING!!
MORE POWER!!
IT'S RUNNING!!
THIS IS MAXIMUM!!
BLIP
BLIP
BLIP
BLIP
VWOOOOO
WHY?!
BLIP
BLIP
BLIP
WHY DOESN'T IT GO UP?!
I'LL DROP THE BALLAST!!
VIZ

BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM
WAAA!
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
RUMBLE

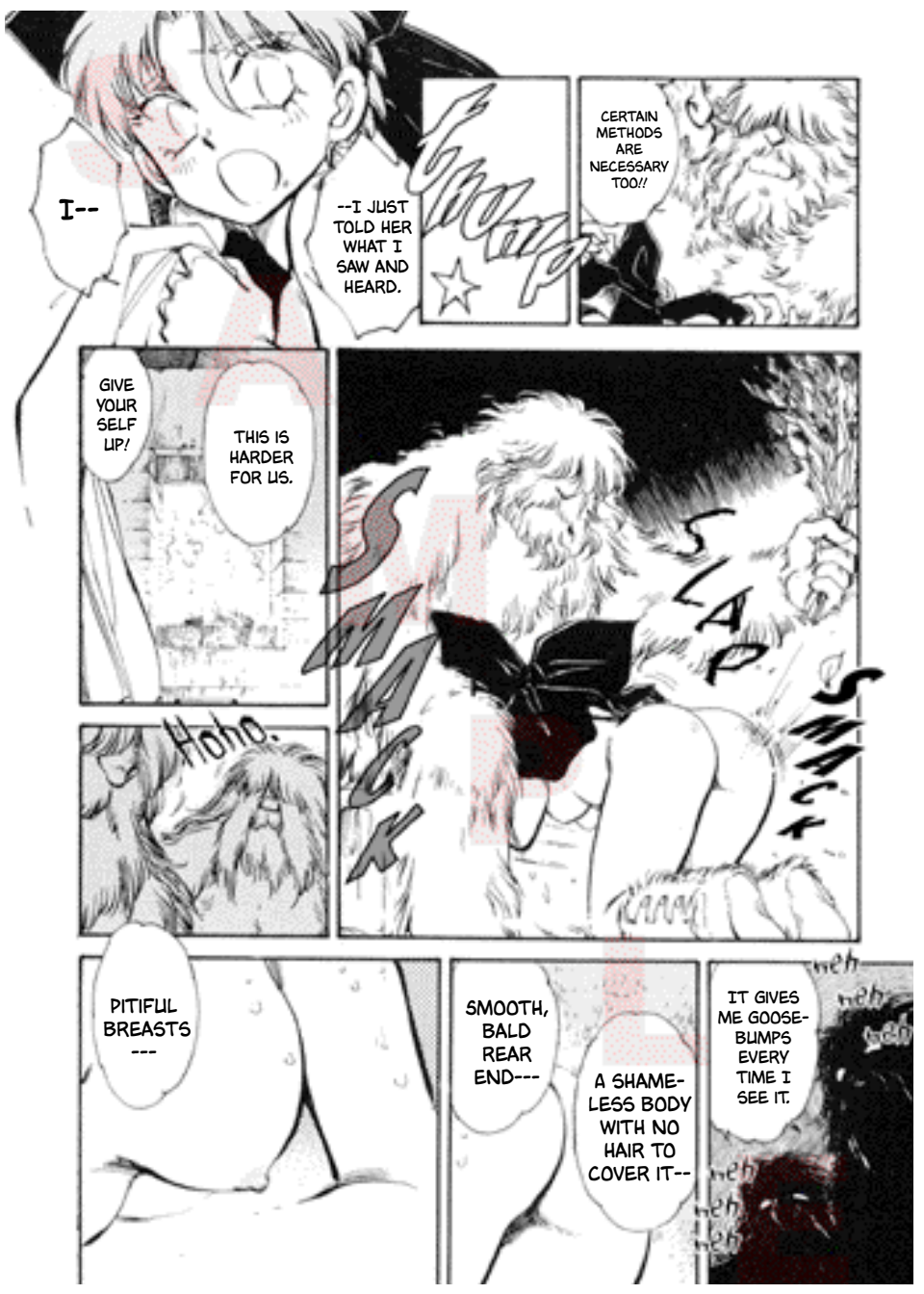
AAAAAAA
BAM
BAMBAM
BAM BAM BAM
WHOA
WOOOOOOO
EEE! WHAT'RE YOU DOING?!
Uzzle
WE'RE GONNA HIT TREES!!
SHUT UP!
I CAN'T CONTROL IT 'CUZ IT'S BLOWN BY THE WIND!!
SHIT!

GASP
RMBL RMBL RMBL
SARAA!
I HAD EYE CONTACT WITH A REINDEER!!
CRASH!
CRACK CRACK CRACK
AAAAAAAA!!
GRAGK

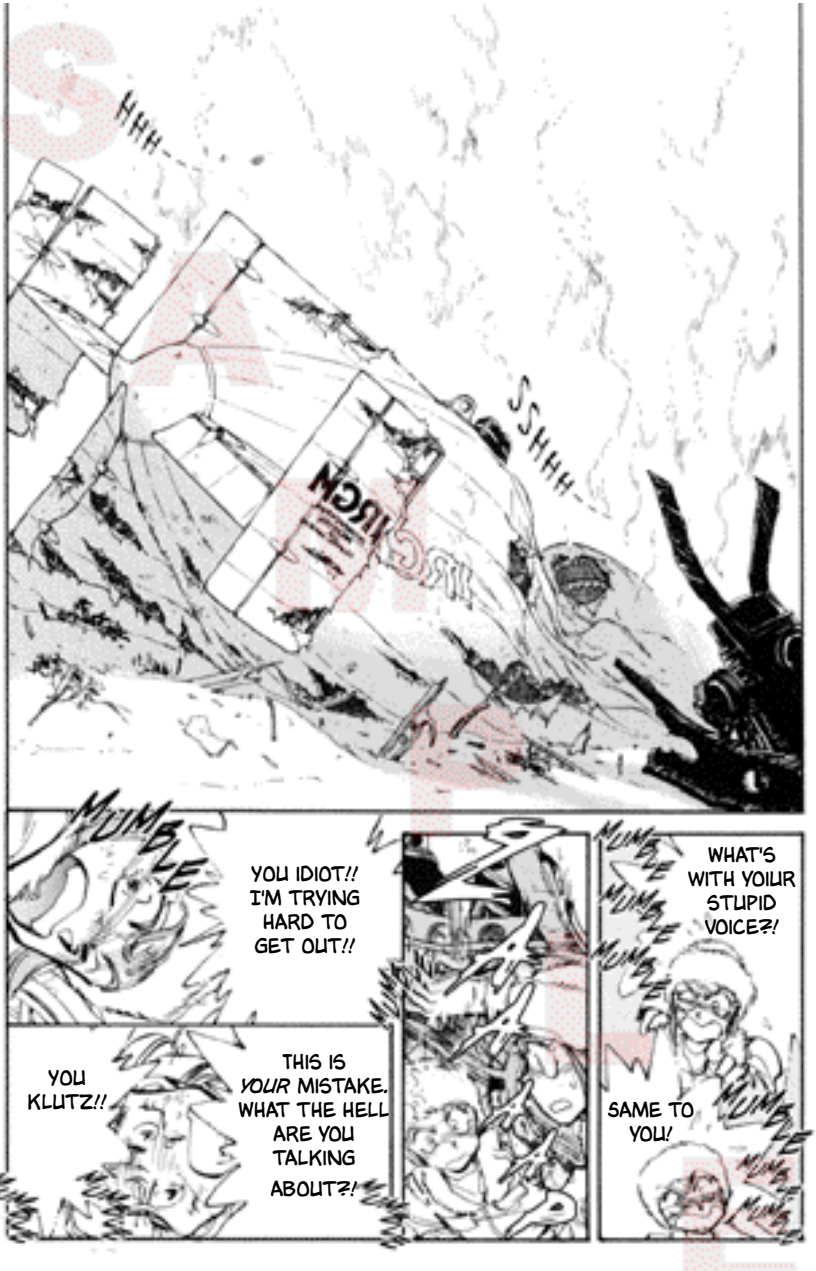

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU?!
YOU'RE A FREAK.
NOT JUST UGLY--YOU'RE *STUPID* TOO. YOU'RE REALLY HOPELESS.
SHE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND THE SUBTLETIES OF HUMAN NATURE.

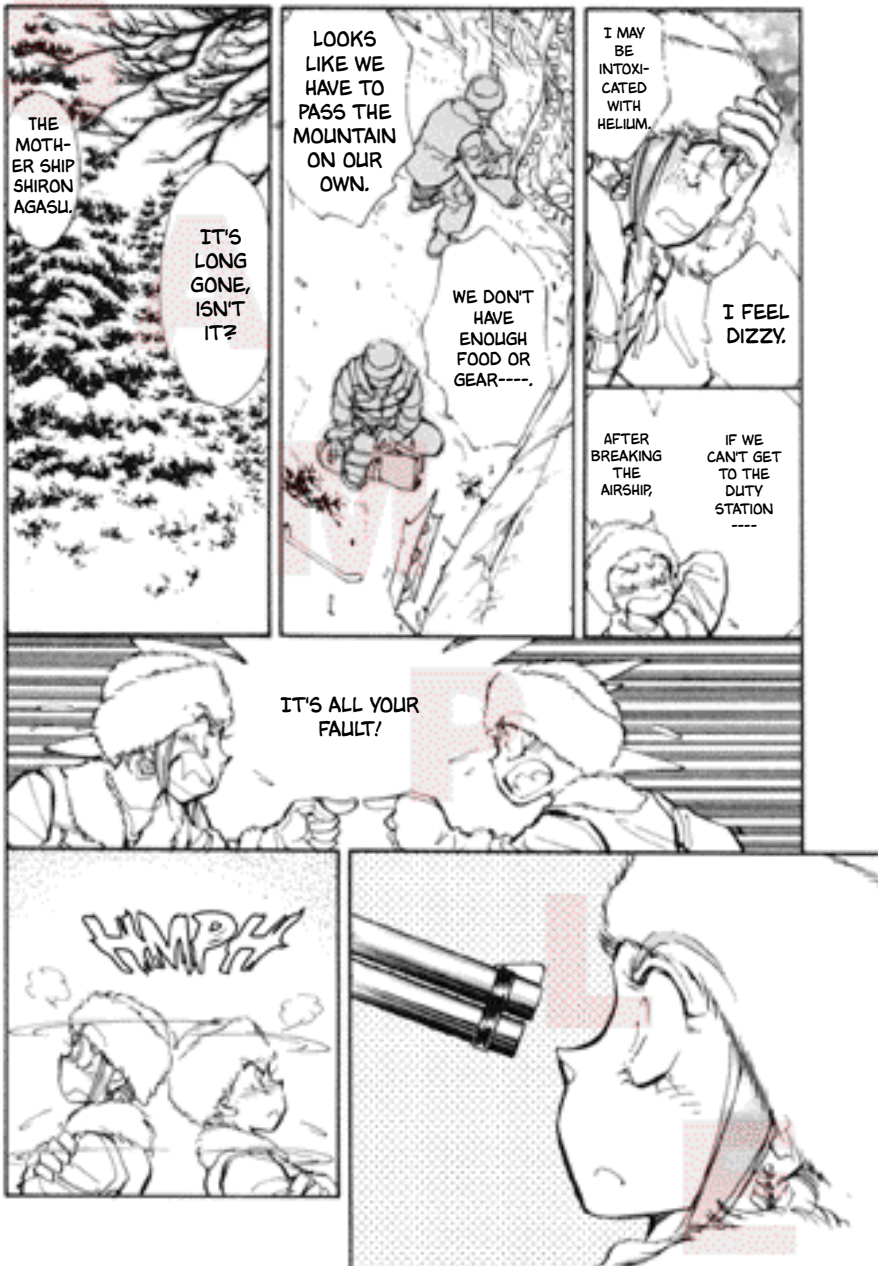
YOU NEED MORE DISCIPLINE.

SMASH
POW
D--
DON'T MAKE UP SUCH A LIE!!
LADY!!
HOW CAN THE FOREST RUNNER DIE IN THE FOREST?!
ITS A LIE!!
STOP IT!!
A LIE.
IT'S A LIE!!
YOU WANTED TO HEAR IT EVEN IF IT WAS BAD NEWS.
THE SHAMAN'S DUTY IS TO REDUCE PEOPLE'S WORRY.
EVEN IF THEY WERE TOLD THEIR LOVED ONE IS DEAD,
IT'S HUMAN NATURE TO WISH TO BELIEVE HE MAY COME HOME SOMEDAY----.
IT'S THOUGHTFUL AS A HUMAN TO TENDERLY GIVE A SLIGHT HOPE TO PEOPLE.


I--
--I JUST TOLD HER WHAT I SAW AND HEARD.
thump
CERTAIN METHODS ARE NECESSARY TOO!!
GIVE YOUR SELF UP!
THIS IS HARDER FOR US.
Hoho.
SMACK
SLAP
SMACK
PITIFUL BREASTS ---
SMOOTH, BALD REAR END---
A SHAME-LESS BODY WITH NO HAIR TO COVER IT--
IT GIVES ME GOOSE-BUMPS EVERY TIME I SEE IT.
meh
meh
meh
meh

SLAP
WE WANT YOU TO BE A FULL-FLEDGED SHAMAN SOON.
THIS IS REALLY FOR YOUR OWN GOOD.
WHIP SMACK
WHIP
SMACK
TH---
THANK YOU---
ELDERS ----
UNLESS YOU ARE USEFUL FOR THE VILLAGE----
--YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO EVEN BE ALIVE.


HHH-
SSHHH-
MUMBLE
YOU IDIOT!! I'M TRYING HARD TO GET OUT!!
YOU KLUTZ!!
THIS IS *YOUR* MISTAKE. WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!
WHAT'S WITH YOUR STUPID VOICE?!
SAME TO YOU!


THE MOTHER SHIP SHIRON AGASU.
IT'S LONG GONE, ISN'T IT?
LOOKS LIKE WE HAVE TO PASS THE MOUNTAIN ON OUR OWN.
WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH FOOD OR GEAR----.
I MAY BE INTOXICATED WITH HELIUM.
I FEEL DIZZY.
AFTER BREAKING THE AIRSHIP,
IF WE CAN'T GET TO THE DUTY STATION ----
IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT!
HMPH

WHO---
WHO ARE YOU PEOPLE ?!
END OF WORK: 4 - 1

WORK 4
The Dark Flower 2

YOUR EXCEL-LENCY.

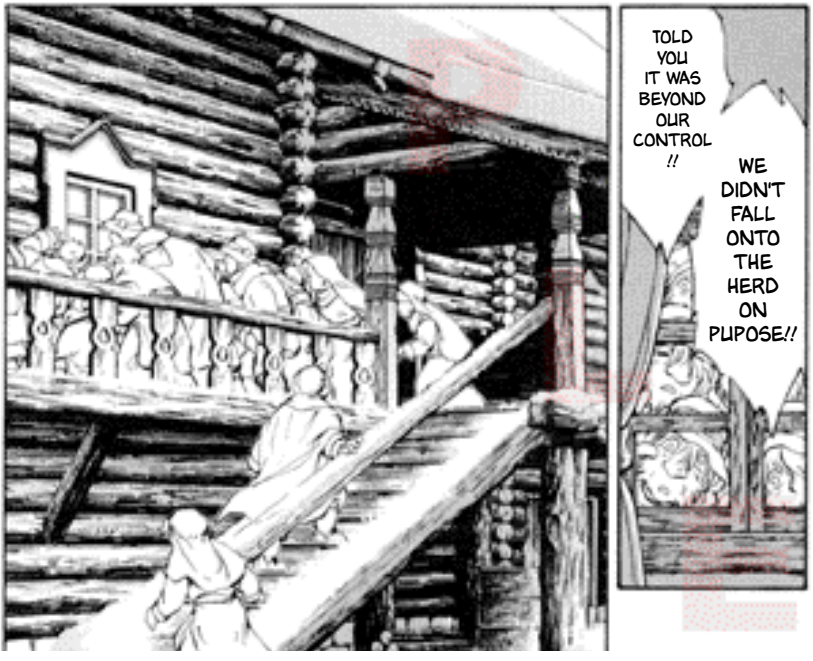
IT'S THE NEW SEASON'S TEA.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO TRY?

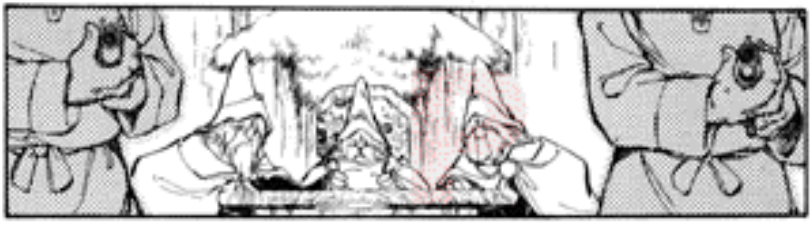
THEN,
"THE GARDEN OF SAVINE*" IS----

YES, MA'AM

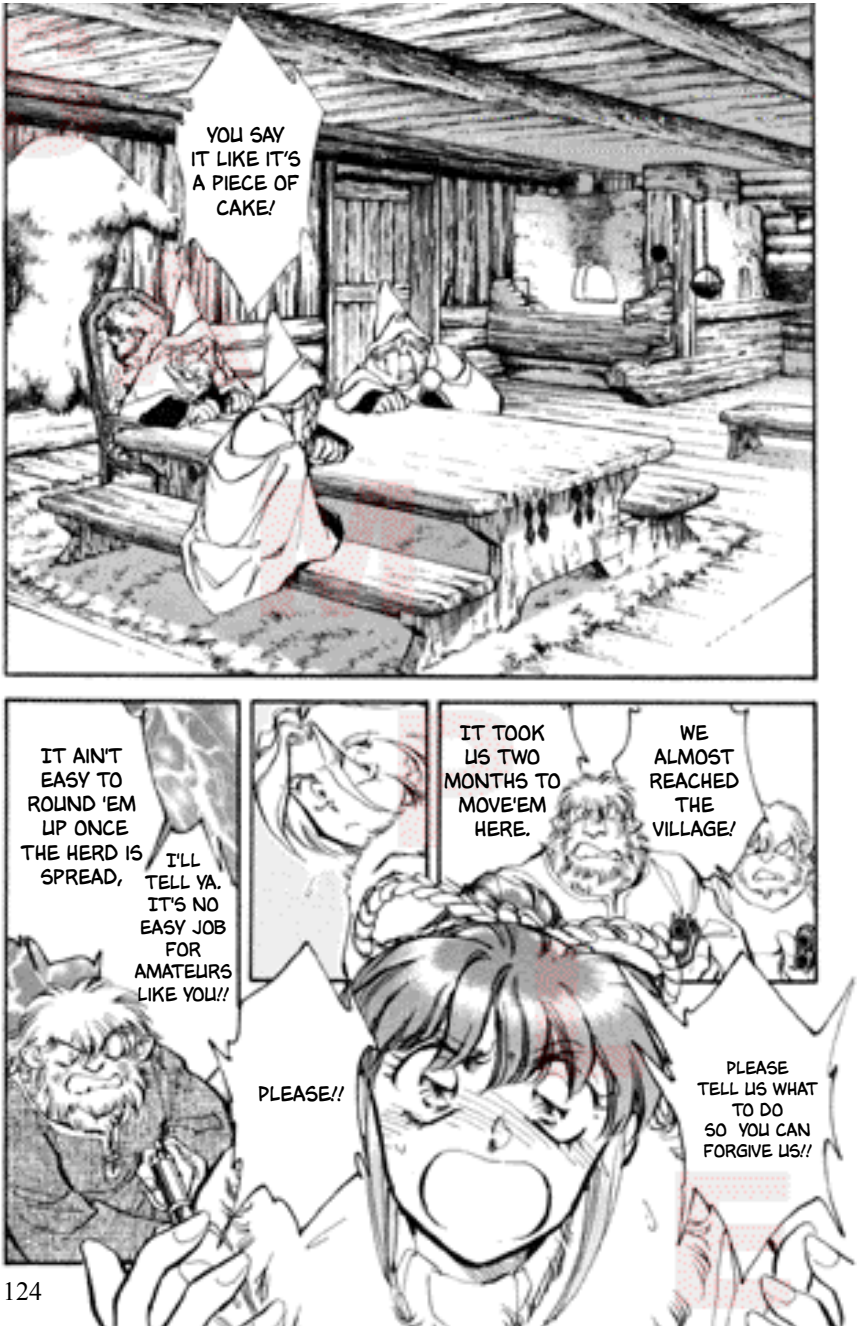
THEY SAY IT'S FINALLY ABLE TO YIELD CROPS.
THEY SPECIALLY SENT THIS HIGHEST QUALITY ORANGE PEKOE TO YOUR EXCELLENCY FROM THE TEA FIELD IN THE RECREATED OLD WORLD ENVIRONMENT.

SIGH
AH,
JUST LIKE A WIND OF HOPE HAS BLOWN THROUGH MY BODY.
EXCEL-LENT WORK ----.
THEY HAVE BROUGHT THE FLAVOR OF OLD TEA BACK TO LIFE.
BY THE WAY, YOUR EXCEL LENCY.
I HAVE MADE ARRANGE-MENTS AS YOU ORDERED.
BUT I WONDER IF SELECTING THOSE TWO WAS THE RIGHT DECISION.
I MEAN ---
I THOUGHT THERE WERE MORE CAPABLE AND
SUITABLE PEOPLE ----.
I SHARE THE SAME ANXIETY ----.
BUT
THE MOST SUITABLE ONE COULD ONLY BE HER----.


TOLD YOU IT WAS BEYOND OUR CONTROL !!
WE DIDN'T FALL ONTO THE HERD ON PUPOSE!!



CRUSH
WE'LL ROUND UP THE RUN-AWAY REIN-DEER.
AND COMPEN-SATE YOU WITH THOSE GOLD COINS!

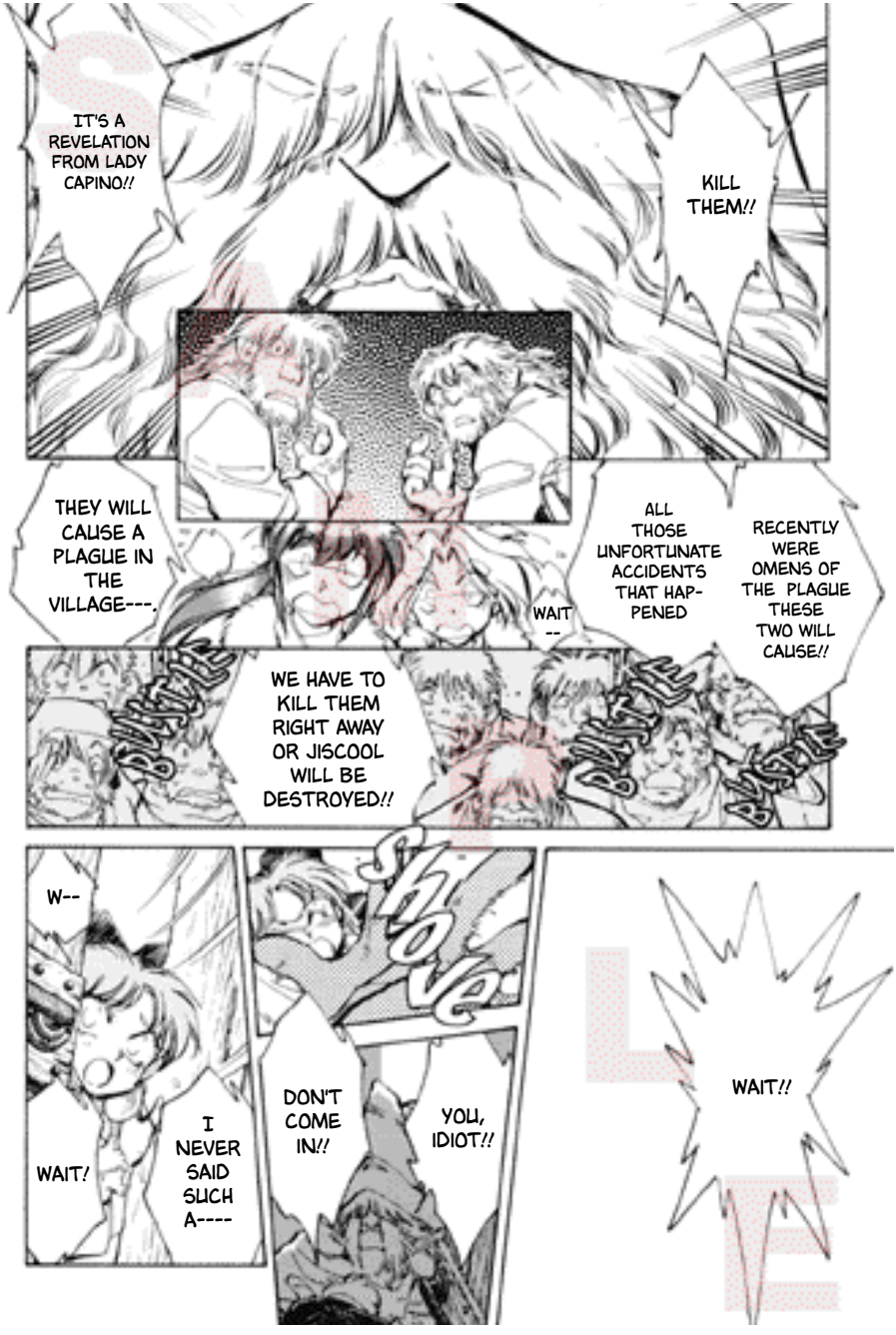

YOU SAY IT LIKE IT'S A PIECE OF CAKE!
WE ALMOST REACHED THE VILLAGE!
IT TOOK US TWO MONTHS TO MOVE'EM HERE.
IT AIN'T EASY TO ROUND 'EM UP ONCE THE HERD IS SPREAD,
I'LL TELL YA. IT'S NO EASY JOB FOR AMATEURS LIKE YOU!!
PLEASE!!
PLEASE TELL US WHAT TO DO SO YOU CAN FORGIVE US!!

IT WAS HORRIBLE.
IT SEEMED THIS VILLAGE CUT OFF CONTACT WITH THE OUTSIDE FOR A LONG TIME.
AND THE PEOPLE SEEMED TO BE HOSTILE TO STRANGERS.

THEY KNEW NOTHING ABOUT GUARD MAIDS.
WHY DID YOU BRING THEM HERE?
THEY DIDN'T EVEN KNOW ABOUT THE GAMUT BASIC CURRENCY, THE UNIVERSAL GOLD COIN----.

YOU PICKED SUCH TROUBLE-MAKERS---.
DON'T LET STRANGERS IN---.
DID YOU FORGET THE VILLAGE LAW?
I GOTTA--
BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS---.

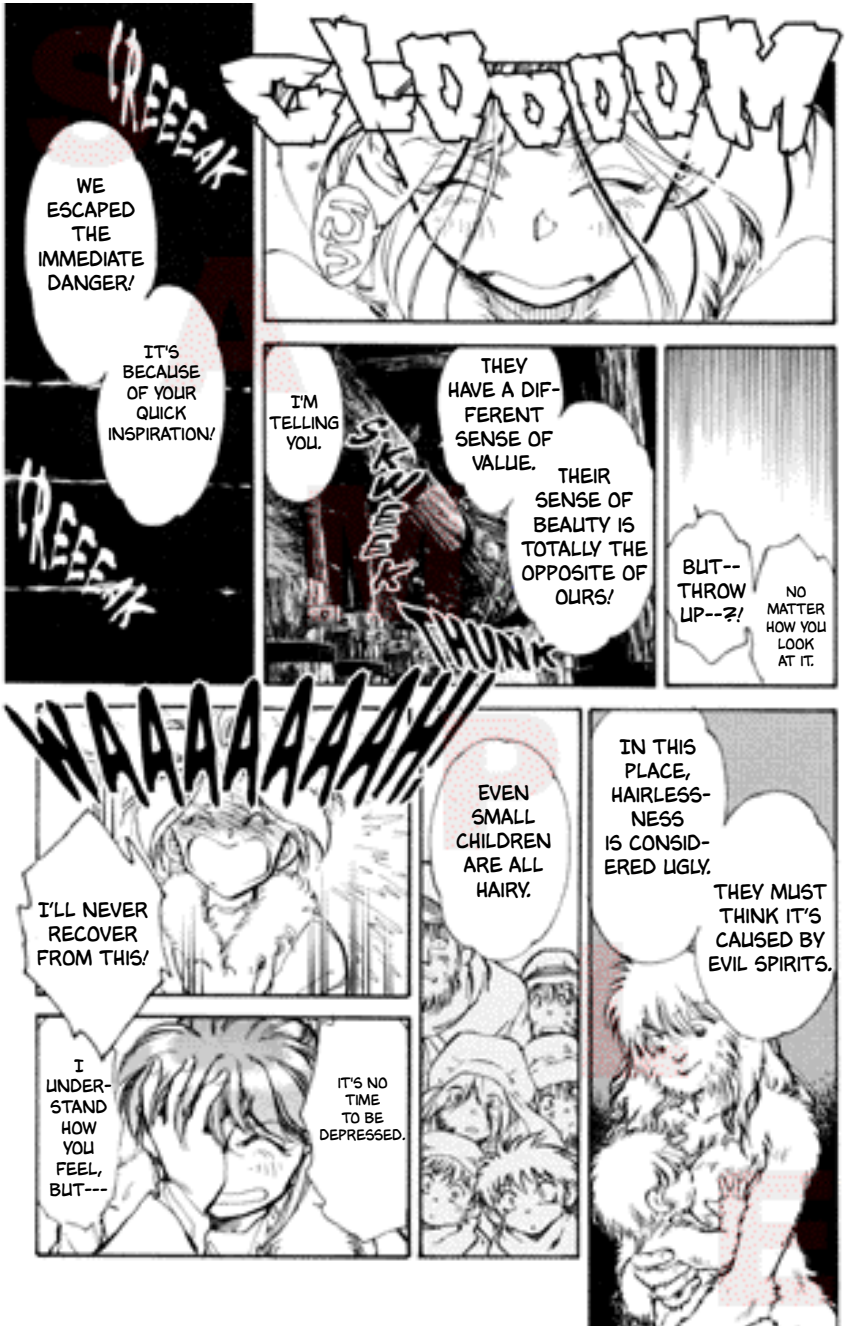
SO, THEY'RE --
I TOLD YOU THEY WOULD COME.
THE "OUTSIDERS"
THAT'S HOW CREATURES LIKE HUMANS ARE.


IT'S A REVELATION FROM LADY CAPINO!!
KILL THEM!!
THEY WILL CAUSE A PLAGUE IN THE VILLAGE---.
WAIT --
ALL THOSE UNFORTUNATE ACCIDENTS THAT HAP-PENED
RECENTLY WERE OMENS OF THE PLAGUE THESE TWO WILL CAUSE!!
WE HAVE TO KILL THEM RIGHT AWAY OR JISCOOL WILL BE DESTROYED!!
W--
WAIT!
I NEVER SAID SUCH A----
Shove
DON'T COME IN!!
YOU, IDIOT!!
WAIT!!

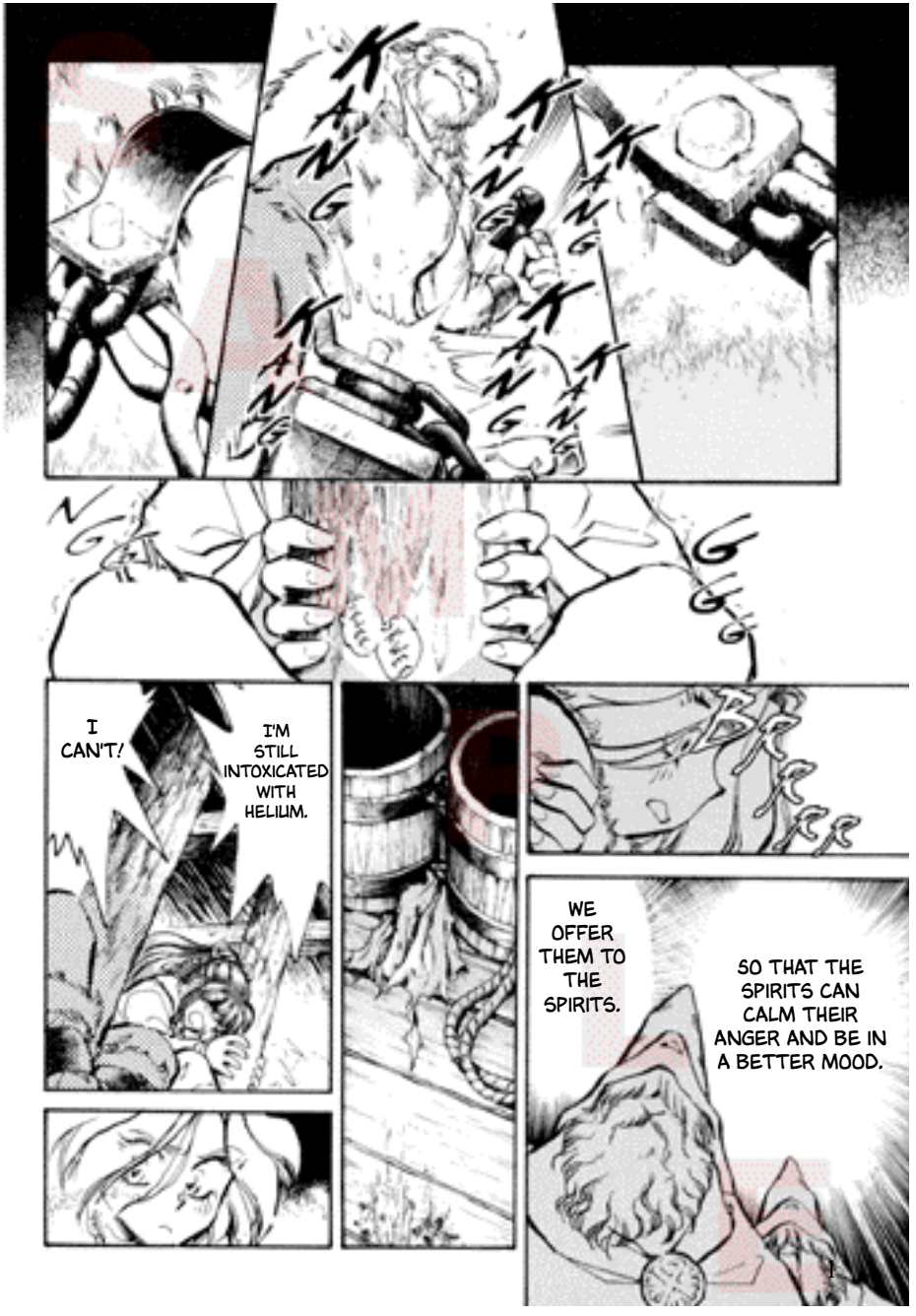
WAIT!!
FLICKER?!
IF THE GOLD COIN DOESN'T PAY THEN I'LL PAY WITH MY BODY!!

EEEEE
AAAAAH
AAARGH
RALPH
RALPH
RALPH
RALPH
NOOOO!
CLOTHES !!
PUT YOUR CLOTHES ON!!
DON'T EXPOSE SUCH DISGUSTING NUDITY TO PEOPLE!!

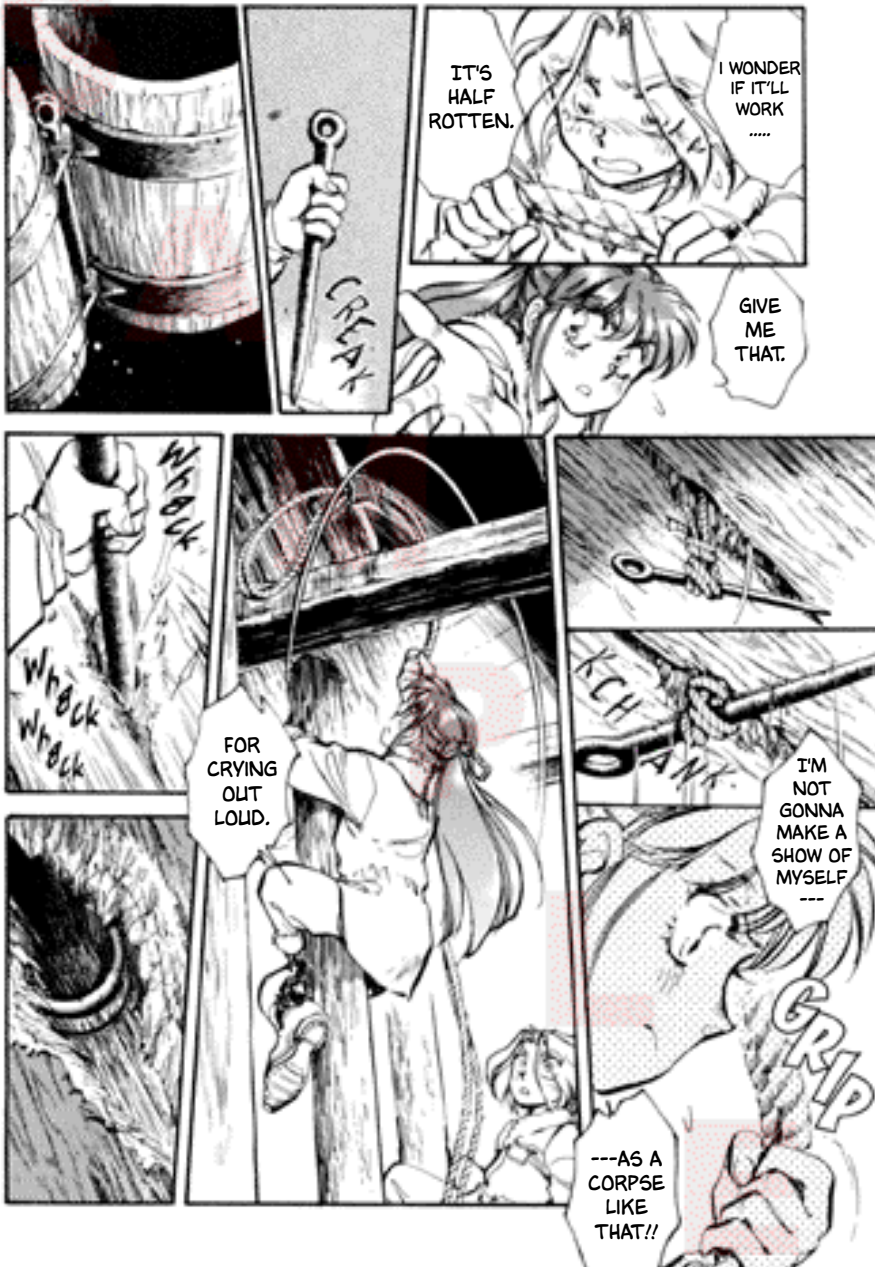
CREEE
CREEEAK

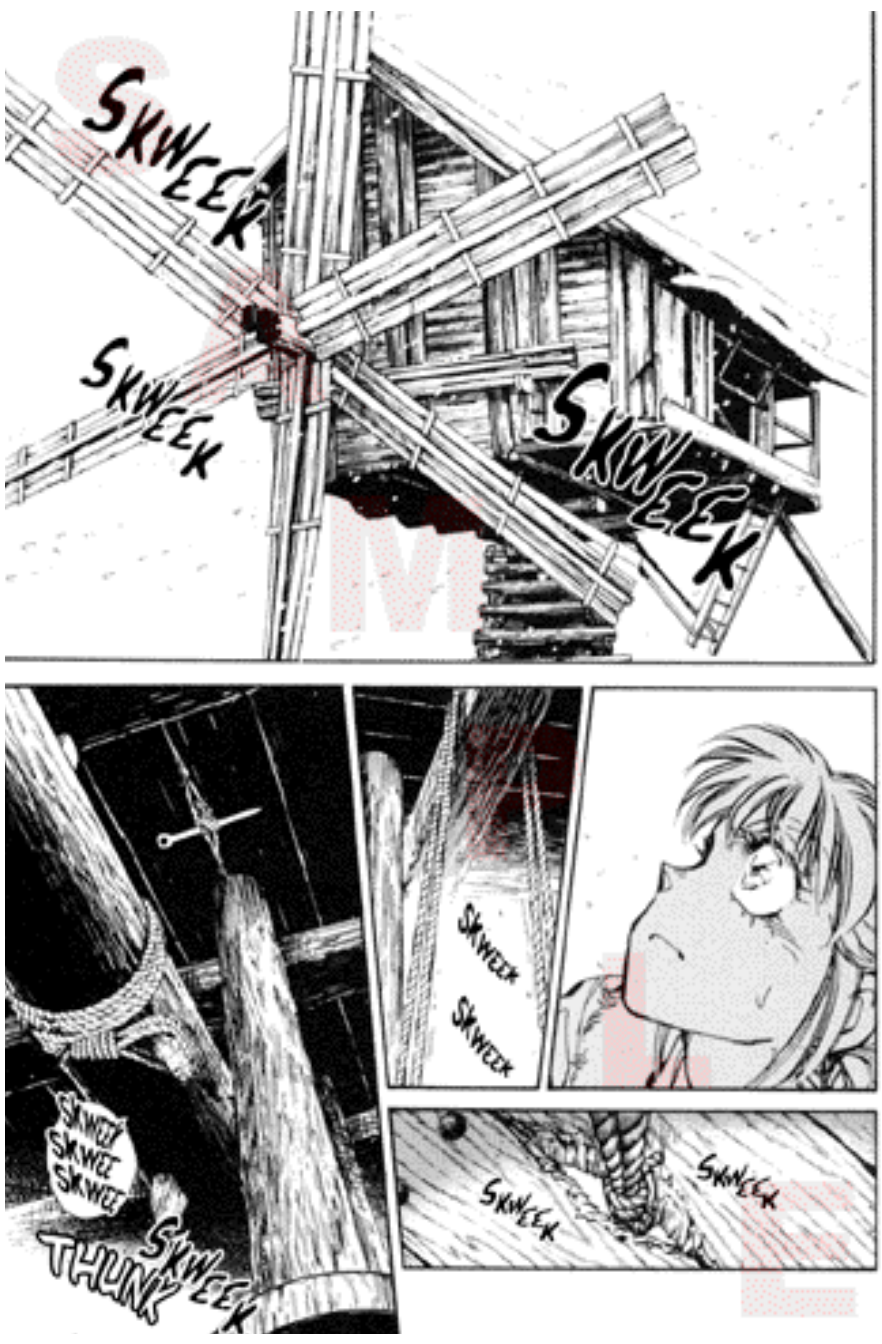

CREEEAK
WE ESCAPED THE IMMEDIATE DANGER!
IT'S BECAUSE OF YOUR QUICK INSPIRATION!
CREEEAK
GLOOOOM
I'M TELLING YOU.
SKWEEK
THUNK
THEY HAVE A DIFFERENT SENSE OF VALUE.
THEIR SENSE OF BEAUTY IS TOTALLY THE OPPOSITE OF OURS!
BUT--THROW UP--?!
NO MATTER HOW YOU LOOK AT IT.
HAAAAAAAH!
I'LL NEVER RECOVER FROM THIS!
I UNDERSTAND HOW YOU FEEL, BUT---
IT'S NO TIME TO BE DEPRESSED.
EVEN SMALL CHILDREN ARE ALL HAIRY.
IN THIS PLACE, HAIRLESSNESS IS CONSIDERED UGLY.
THEY MUST THINK IT'S CAUSED BY EVIL SPIRITS.

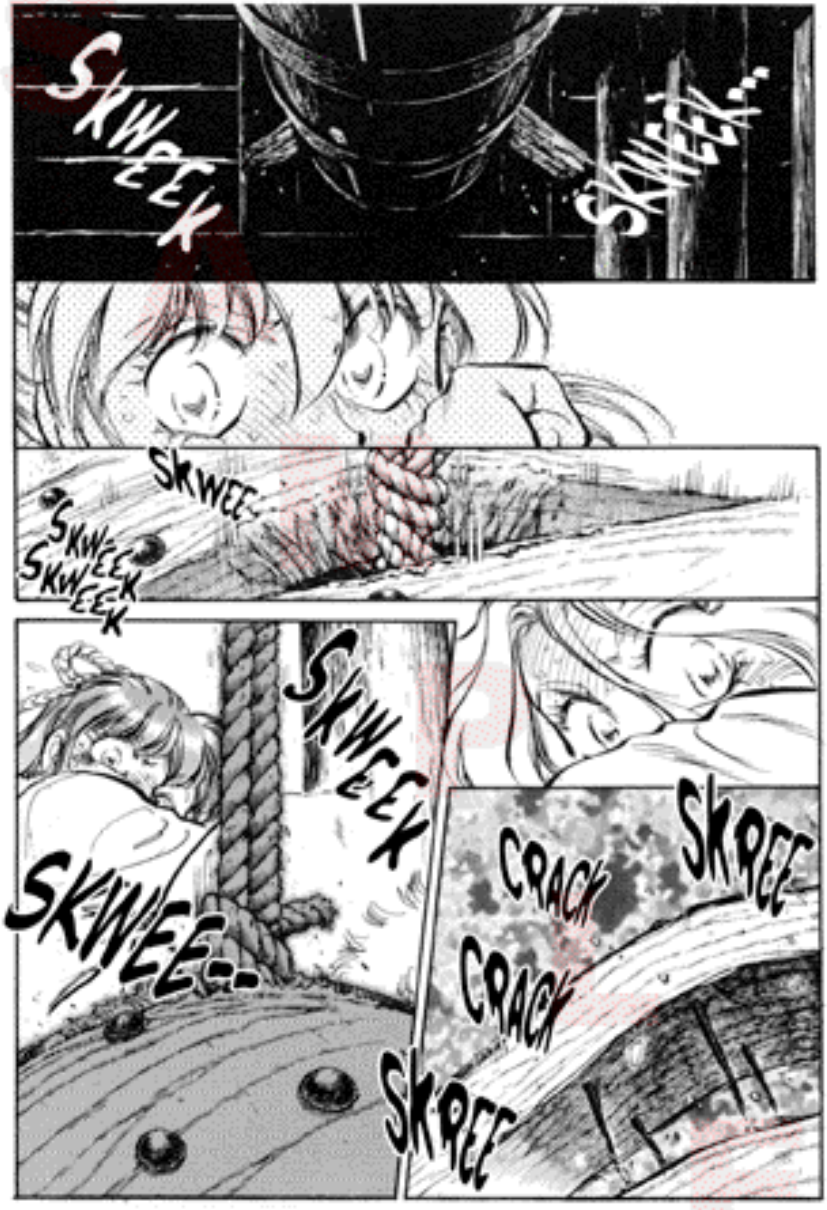
SKWEEK
SKWEEK
HOW CAN WE BE AN OFFERING TO SPIRITS---
--WHILE WE'RE LOCKED IN A SHED WHERE WIND SEEPS IN THROUGH THE CRACKS?
WE'RE JUST GONNA FREEZE TO DEATH.
--AND THE BOTTOM.
GUHK
FROM THE TOP ----
HE--
HEY!!
WHAT'RE YOU DOING?!


KANG
KANG
KANG
KANG
KANG
KANG
KANG
I CAN'T!
I'M STILL INTOXICATED WITH HELIUM.
WE OFFER THEM TO THE SPIRITS.
SO THAT THE SPIRITS CAN CALM THEIR ANGER AND BE IN A BETTER MOOD.

BRR
YOU'RE KIDDING!!
IF WE'RE LEFT ALONE IN A DRY DRAFTY PLACE LIKE THIS,
THAT'S WHAT WE'RE GONNA BE.
IT'S JUST LIKE CURING HAM.
THE SCRATCHES ON THE FLOOR ----
THESE ARE FINGER-NAIL SCRATCHES.
WE'RE NOT THE ONLY ONES.
OTHER PEOPLE WERE KILLED HERE, TOO.


I WONDER IF IT'LL WORK .....
IT'S HALF ROTTEN.
CREAK
GIVE ME THAT.
WHACK
WHACK WHACK
FOR CRYING OUT LOUD.
KCH
ANK
I'M NOT GONNA MAKE A SHOW OF MYSELF ---
GRIP
---AS A CORPSE LIKE THAT!!


SKWEEK
SKWEEK
SKWEEK
SKWEEK
SKWEEK
SKWEEK
SKWEEK
SKWEEK
SKWEEK
SKWEEK
THUNK
SKWEEK

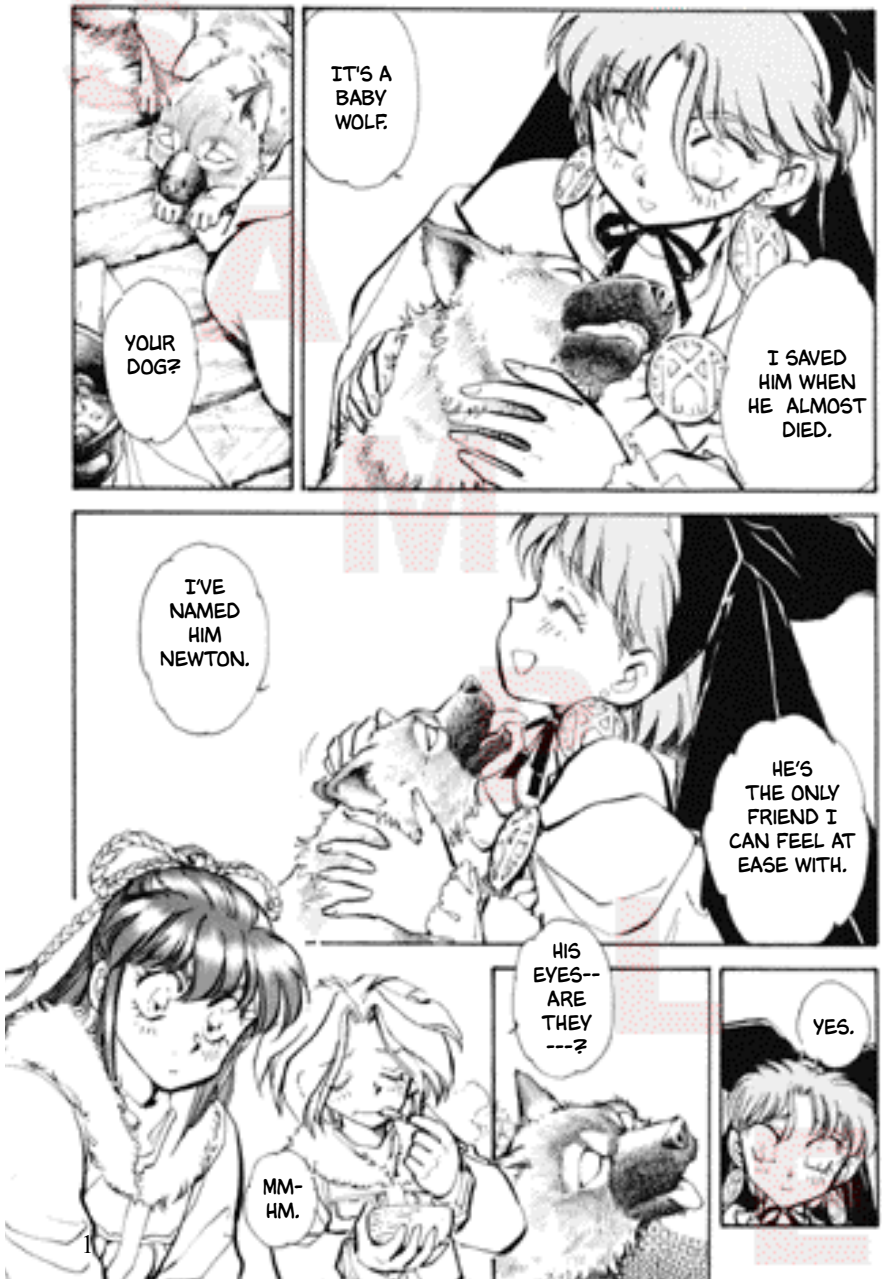

SKWEEK
SKWEEK...
SKWEE...
SKWEE SKWEEK SKWEEEK
SKWEEK
SKWEE...
CRACK
SKREE
CRACK
SKREE

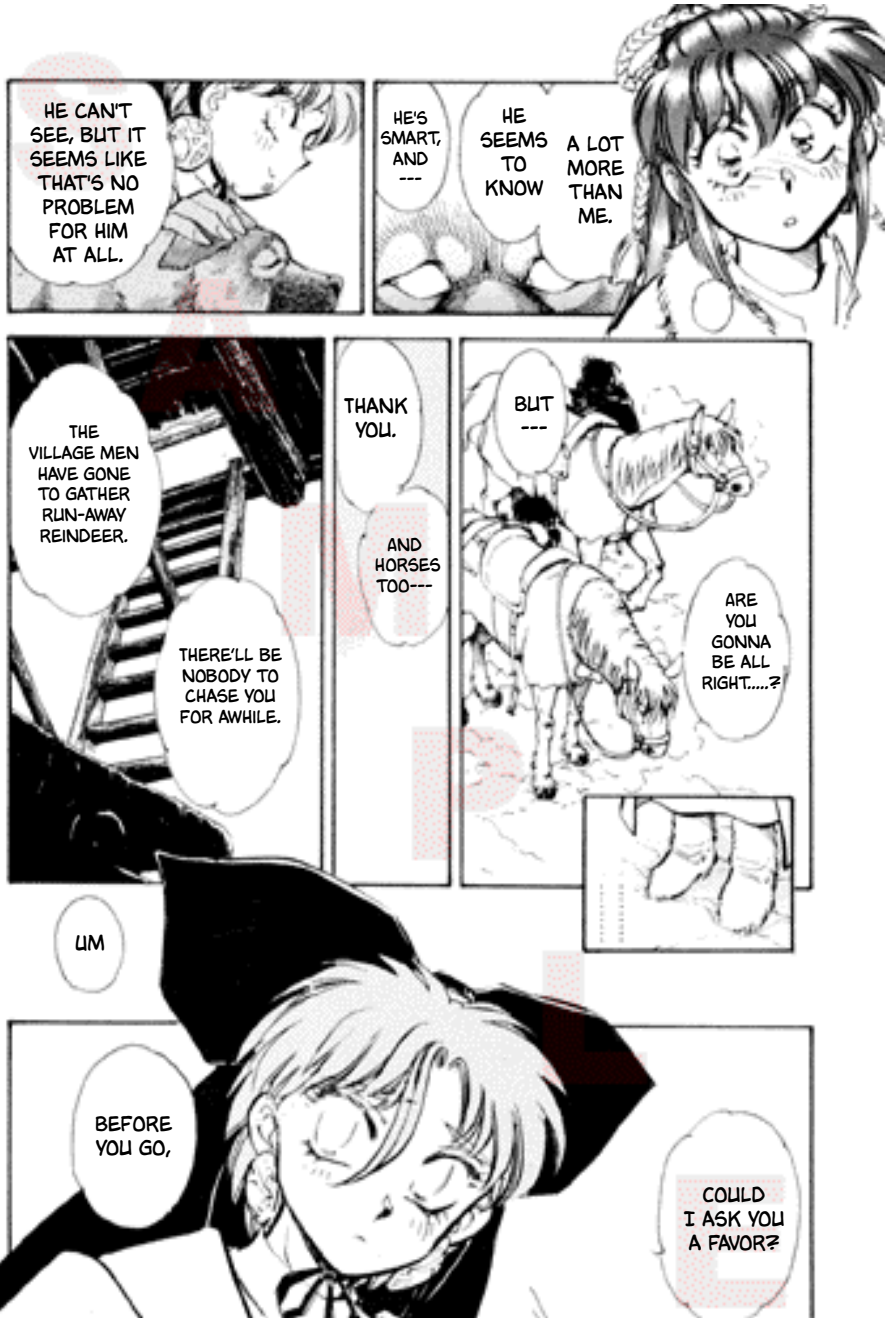
CRACK!
SARAI!!
SKWEEK
SKWEEK!
THIS GOES LOOSE IF YOU YANK IT OFF THE PESTLE BASE.
WATCH OUT.
GOT IT!

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, SARAI?

GRAB
I'M NOT A BIG FAN OF RAW HAM!
SORRY TO DIS-APPOINT YOU.
HUH?
SARA!!
THIS GIRL ---

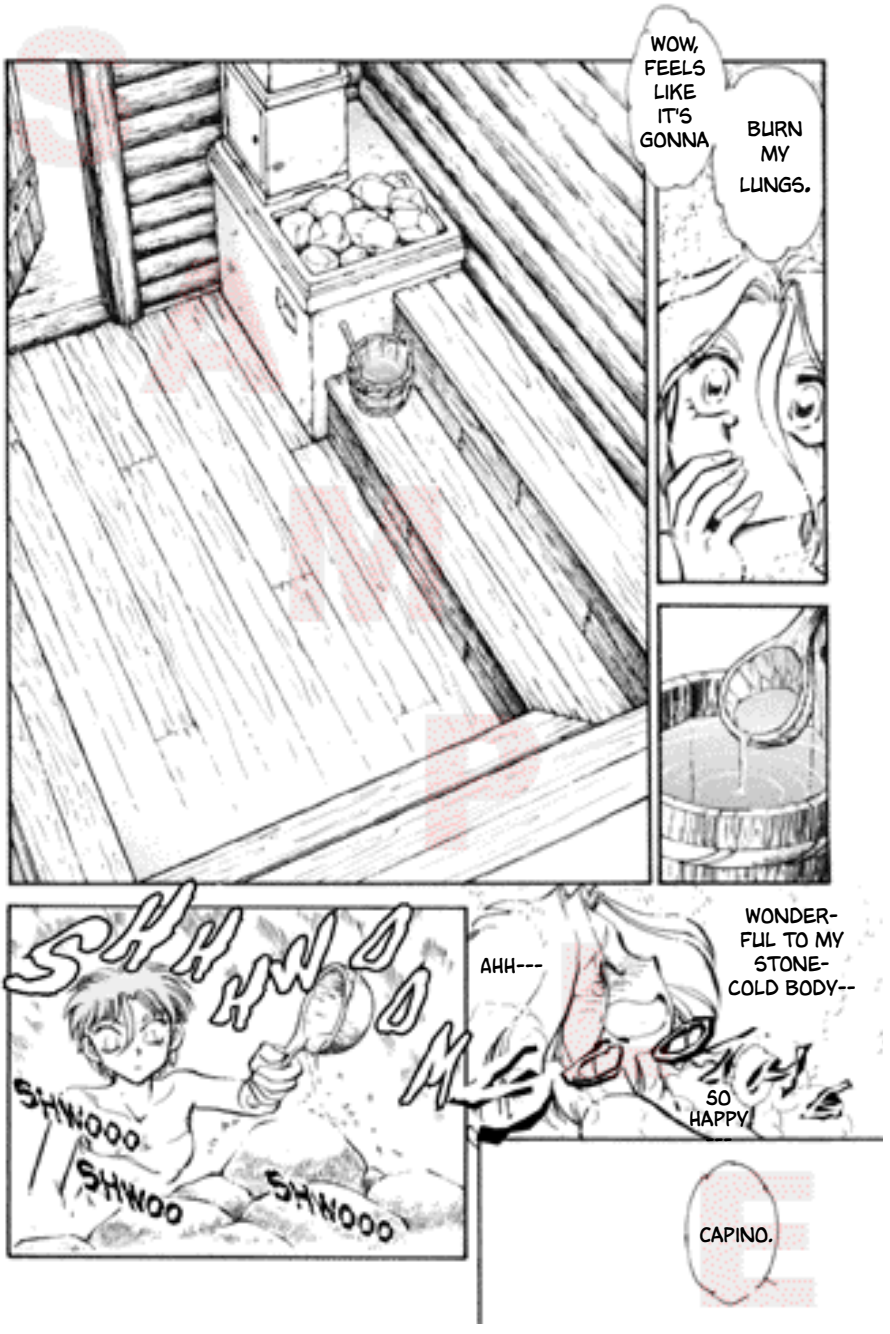
I'M SORRY,
I'M SORRY,
I'M SORRY.
WITH THAT GUN-POWDER.
YOU COULD OF BLOWN OUR LEGS OFF
THAT'S THE ONLY THING I COULD THINK OF THAT TIME ----.
I FEEL ALIVE AGAIN.
OH, WELL, ALL RIGHT ---
FOR THE SAKE OF THIS BORSCHT ----

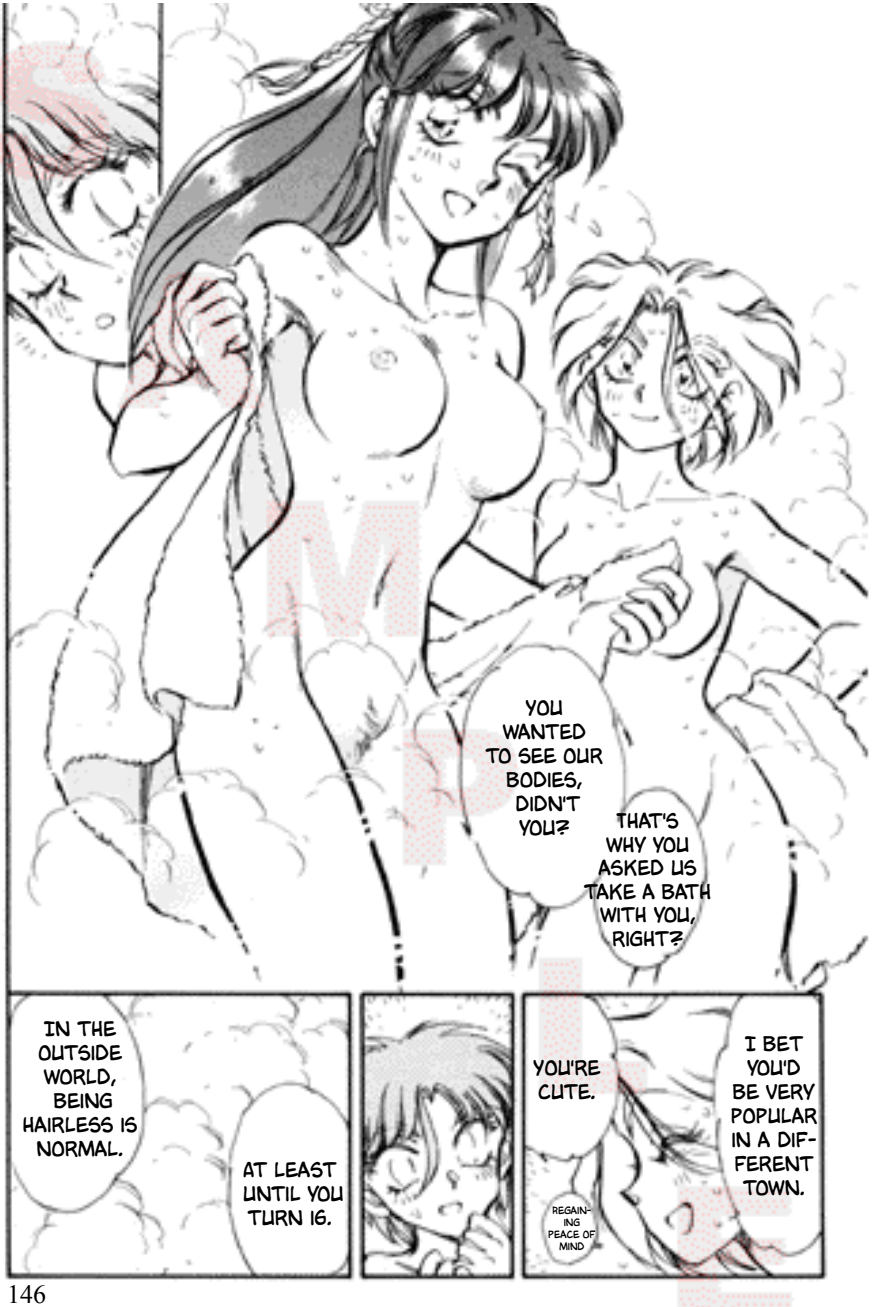

IT'S A BABY WOLF.
YOUR DOG?
I SAVED HIM WHEN HE ALMOST DIED.
I'VE NAMED HIM NEWTON.
HE'S THE ONLY FRIEND I CAN FEEL AT EASE WITH.
HIS EYES-- ARE THEY ---?
YES.
MM-HM.


HE CAN'T SEE, BUT IT SEEMS LIKE THAT'S NO PROBLEM FOR HIM AT ALL.
HE'S SMART, AND ---
HE SEEMS TO KNOW A LOT MORE THAN ME.
THE VILLAGE MEN HAVE GONE TO GATHER RUN-AWAY REINDEER.
THERE'LL BE NOBODY TO CHASE YOU FOR AWHILE.
THANK YOU.
AND HORSES TOO---
BUT ---
ARE YOU GONNA BE ALL RIGHT.....?
UM
BEFORE YOU GO,
COULD I ASK YOU A FAVOR?

IS THIS ----
--THE BATH?

THIS IS FOR THE ELDERS AND IT'S THE LARGEST BATHHOUSE IN THE VILLAGE.


WOW, FEELS LIKE IT'S GONNA
BURN MY LUNGS.
SHWOOOO
SHWOOOO
SHWOOOO
SHWOOOO
AHH---
WONDER-FUL TO MY STONE-COLD BODY--
SO HAPPY
CAPINO.

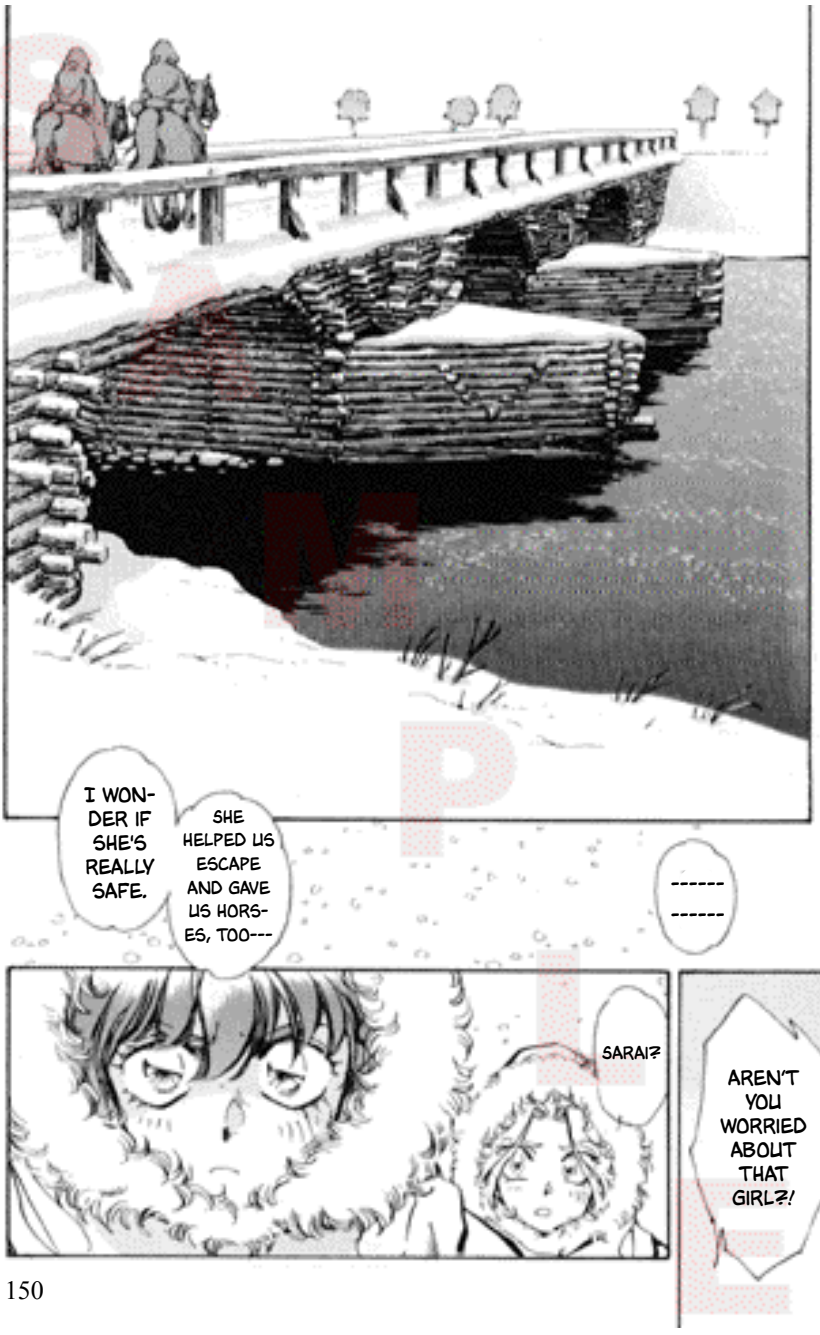

YOU WANTED TO SEE OUR BODIES, DIDN'T YOU?
THAT'S WHY YOU ASKED US TAKE A BATH WITH YOU, RIGHT?
IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD, BEING HAIRLESS IS NORMAL.
AT LEAST UNTIL YOU TURN 16.
YOU'RE CUTE.
REGAINING PEACE OF MIND
I BET YOU'D BE VERY POPULAR IN A DIFFERENT TOWN.

WE HAVE THE ORIGI-NAL HUMAN APPEAR-ANCE.
THOSE VILLAGE PEOPLE HAVE BECOME HAIRY AS THE MUTATION SETTLED.
I-- I'M
NOT ---
--A FREAK THEN---
NOT AT ALL!!
PRICKLE

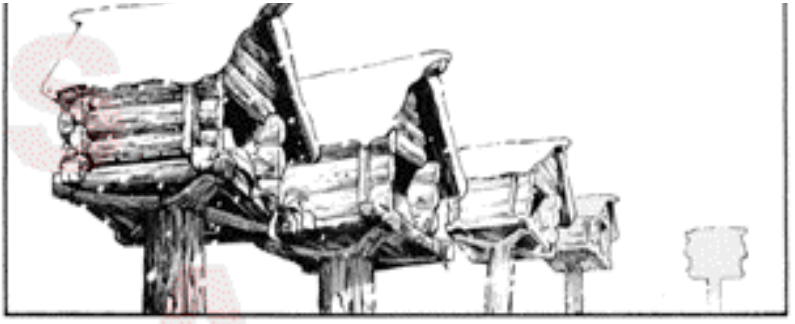
ARE YOU SATISFIED?
CAPINO?
THEY ARE MAVERICKS.
THEY ARE NOT REAL HUMANS.
OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE IS A WORLD FULL OF LIARS AND ACCURSED CREATURES.
END OF WORK: 4 - 2

WORK 4

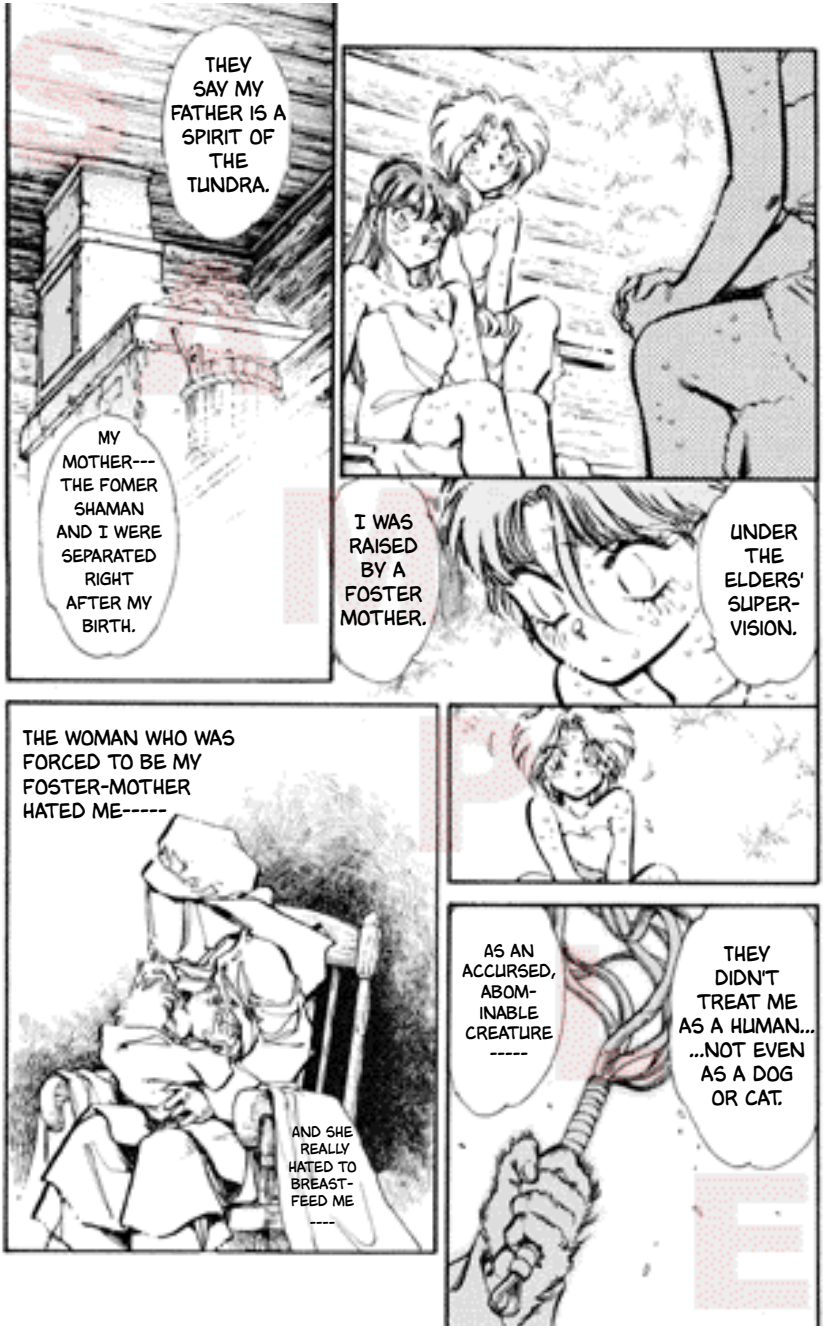
The Dark Flower 3

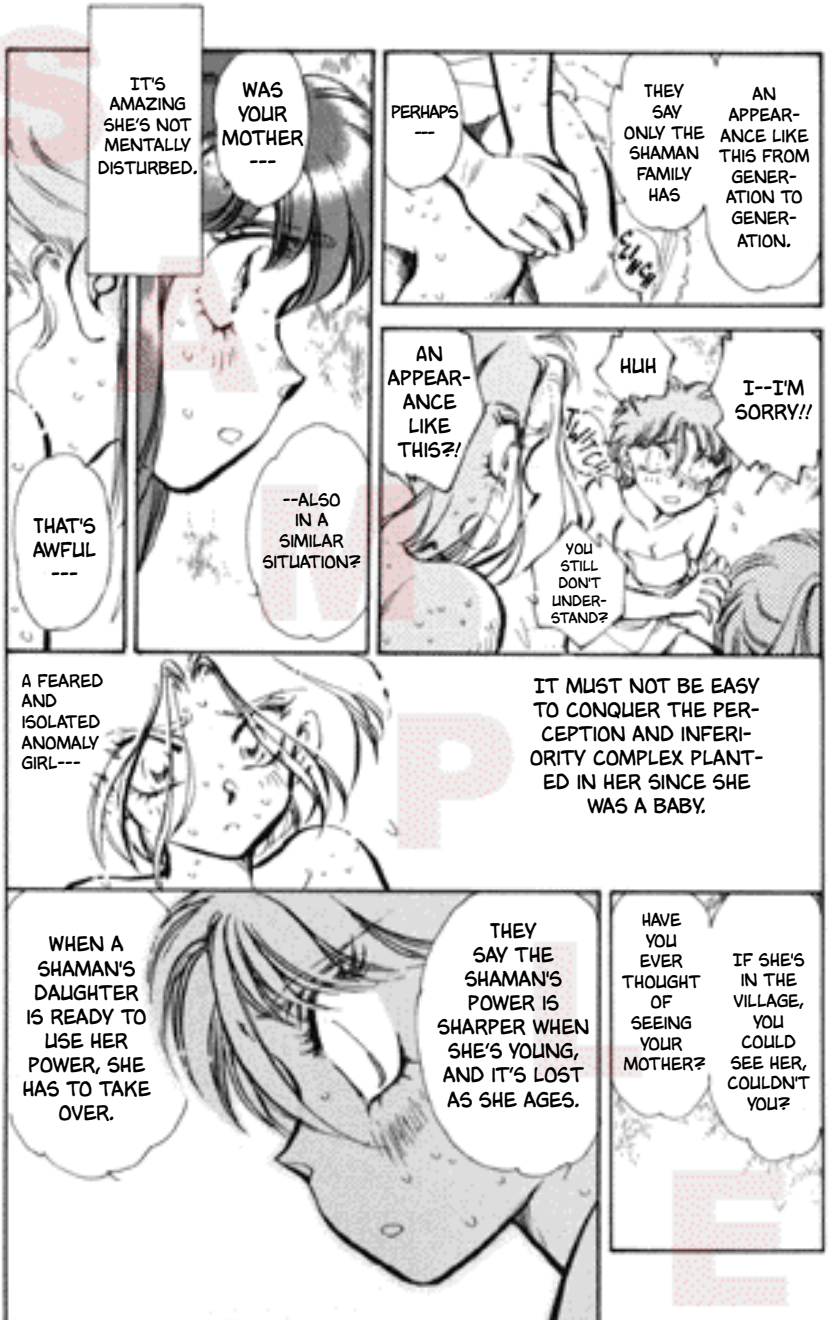

I WONDER IF SHE'S REALLY SAFE.
SHE HELPED US ESCAPE AND GAVE US HORSES, TOO---

SARAI?
AREN'T YOU WORRIED ABOUT THAT GIRL?!



--WHAT SHE MEANT BY PROTECTING THE VILLAGE BY BEING A SPIRIT?!
THIS IS -----


THEY SAY MY FATHER IS A SPIRIT OF THE TUNDRA.
MY MOTHER--- THE FOMER SHAMAN AND I WERE SEPARATED RIGHT AFTER MY BIRTH.
I WAS RAISED BY A FOSTER MOTHER.
UNDER THE ELDERS' SUPER-VISION.
THE WOMAN WHO WAS FORCED TO BE MY FOSTER-MOTHER HATED ME-----
AND SHE REALLY HATED TO BREAST-FEED ME ----
AS AN ACCURSED, ABOM-INABLE CREATURE -----
THEY DIDN'T TREAT ME AS A HUMAN... ...NOT EVEN AS A DOG OR CAT.


IT'S AMAZING SHE'S NOT MENTALLY DISTURBED.
WAS YOUR MOTHER ---
--ALSO IN A SIMILAR SITUATION?
THAT'S AWFUL ---
PERHAPS ---
THEY SAY ONLY THE SHAMAN FAMILY HAS
AN APPEAR-ANCE LIKE THIS FROM GENER-ATION TO GENER-ATION.
AN APPEAR-ANCE LIKE THIS?!
HUH
I--I'M SORRY!!
YOU STILL DON'T UNDER-STAND?
A FEARED AND ISOLATED ANOMALY GIRL---
IT MUST NOT BE EASY TO CONQUER THE PER-CEPTION AND INFERI-ORITY COMPLEX PLANT-ED IN HER SINCE SHE WAS A BABY.
WHEN A SHAMAN'S DAUGHTER IS READY TO USE HER POWER, SHE HAS TO TAKE OVER.
THEY SAY THE SHAMAN'S POWER IS SHARPER WHEN SHE'S YOUNG, AND IT'S LOST AS SHE AGES.
HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT OF SEEING YOUR MOTHER?
IF SHE'S IN THE VILLAGE, YOU COULD SEE HER, COULDN'T YOU?

Y--
YOU'RE KIDDING,
AREN'T YOU?! THAT'S INCREDIBLE.
WE ARE NO LONGER A SHAMAN,
WE ARE NOT ALLOWED TO STAY IN THE VILLAGE.
ONCE ---
SHAMANS EXIST ONLY FOR THAT PURPOSE.
TO PROTECT THE VILLAGE...

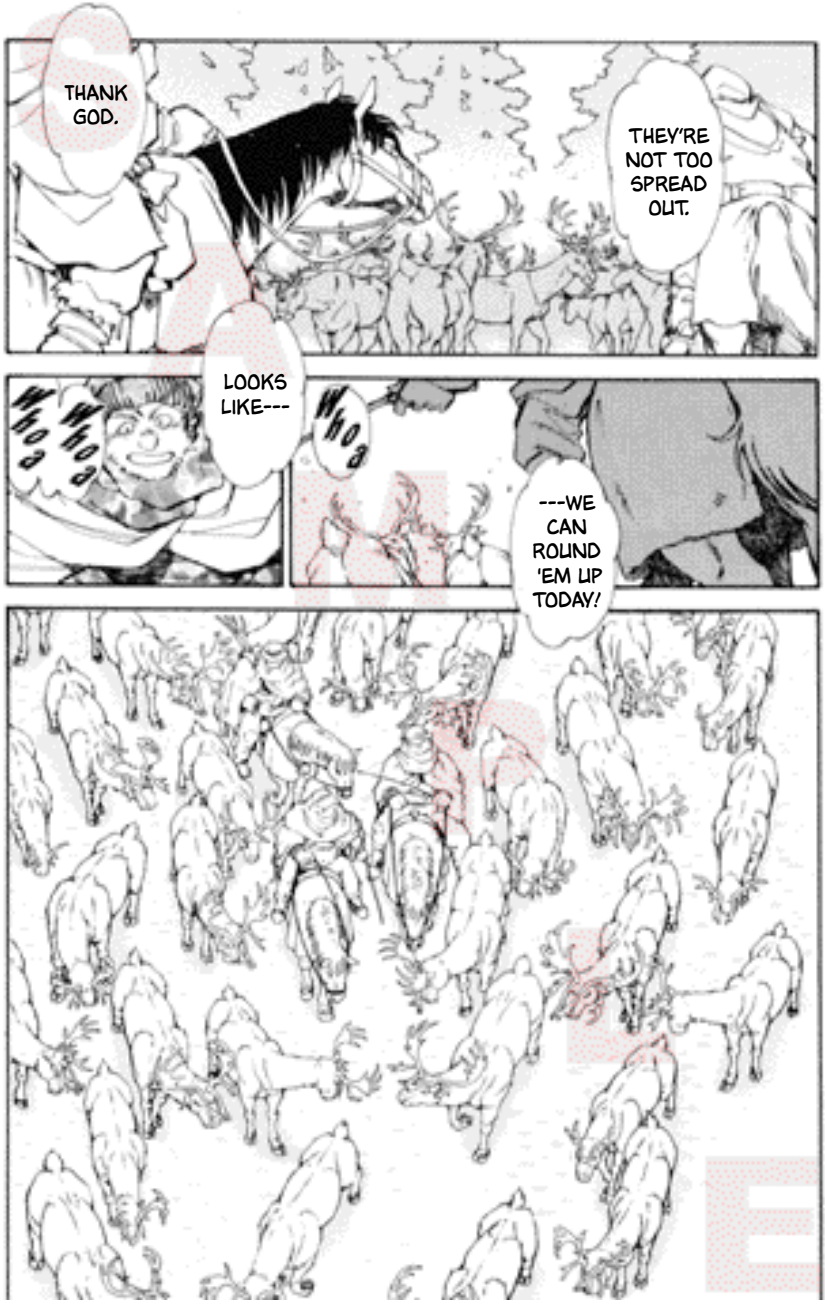
PAD
PAD
PLOP
HUH?
NEWTON!
THIS IS OUR THANKS FOR ENCOURAGING CAPINO.
EAT THEM IF YOU DON'T WANT TO DIE.

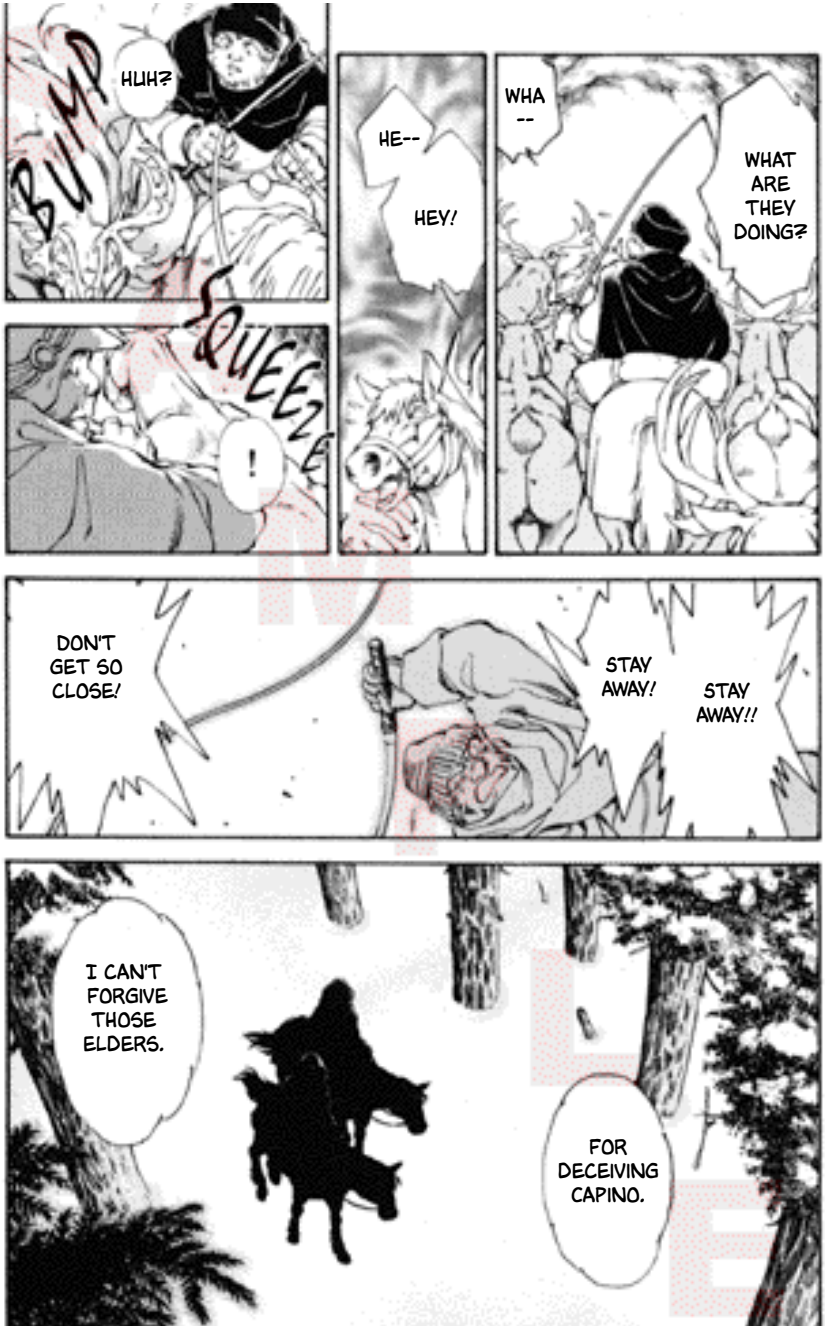
WHA-- WHAT ?!
YOU SPEAK HUMAN WORDS?
THE POISON OF BLACK RUST MOSS* IS STRONG ONCE IT CIRCULATES THROUGH YOUR BODY.
YOU'D BETTER EAT IT NOW.
TAP
THAT BORSCHT!!
SARAI!!
HERE, FLICKER !!
E--
EAT THIS?!
THOSE ELDERS POISONED YOU.
TAP
TAP
DON'T BLAME CAPINO.

WHA--
WHAT WAS THAT?!
NO MATTER HOW SMART HE IS,
CAN A WOLF TALK?
PYTHAGORAS,
DESARGUES, PLATO

EUCLID
EINSTEIN

SARAI---?!
Mumble Mumble
I FOUND THEM!


THANK GOD.
THEY'RE NOT TOO SPREAD OUT.
LOOKS LIKE---
Whoa
Whoa
Whoa
---WE CAN ROUND 'EM UP TODAY!

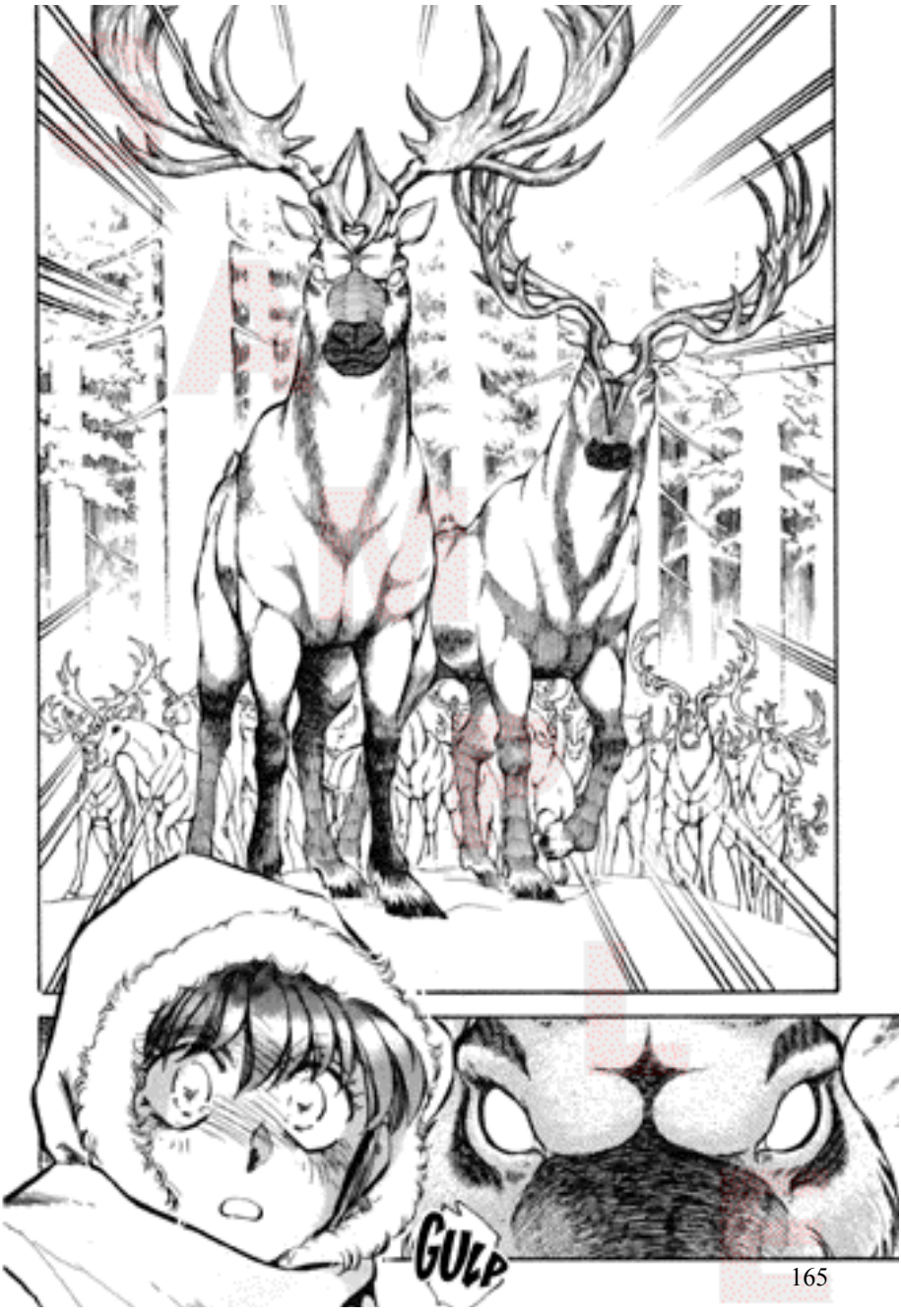

BUMP
HUH?
SQUEEZE
!
HE--
HEY!
WHA --
WHAT ARE THEY DOING?
DON'T GET SO CLOSE!
STAY AWAY!
STAY AWAY!!
I CAN'T FORGIVE THOSE ELDERS.
FOR DECEIVING CAPINO.

MAYBE WE SHOULD HAVE---
--DRAGGED HER OUT BY FORCE.
MY ANCES-TORS AND SPIRITS
WOULDN'T FORGIVE ME ----
IF----
I DON'T SEE THE VILLAGE THROUGH.
A LIFE LIKE THAT WITH NO HAPPI-NESS----
I DON'T THINK SHE SHOULD FEEL OBLIGATED TO THE VILLAGE----

HOW ARE THEY?
THOSE MAVERICK GIRLS WHO VIOLATED THE SPIRIT OF THE SHAMAN FOR REVELA-TIONS.
RIGHT ABOUT NOW IS THE TIME THE POISON WILL CIRCULATE THROUGH THEIR ENTIRE BODY.
SKWEEK
SKWEEK
SKWEEK
THEY'RE PROBABLY IN EXTREME AGONY
AND SPITTING BLOOD ...
DYING FROM THE POISON OF BLACK RUST MOSS IS---
--A REAL HORROR SHOW.
F-ohh...
TH--
THE HORSES OF THE TWO----
NOBODY IS ON THEM!!
SNOW IS RED!!
BLOOD STAINED SNOW!! ALL OVER ----!!

FHO
hohohoh
THOSE HUMANS.
GRIP
SERVES THEM RIGHT---.

NOW, WHAT IS THIS?
HOW GRUE-SOME----
I WONDER IF IT WAS THE WOLVES.
DO WOLVES CLIMB UP POSTS WITH PREY IN THEIR MOUTH?
CRUNCH
THERE'S GOTTA BE *FIVE* PEOPLE STUFFED IN THERE...

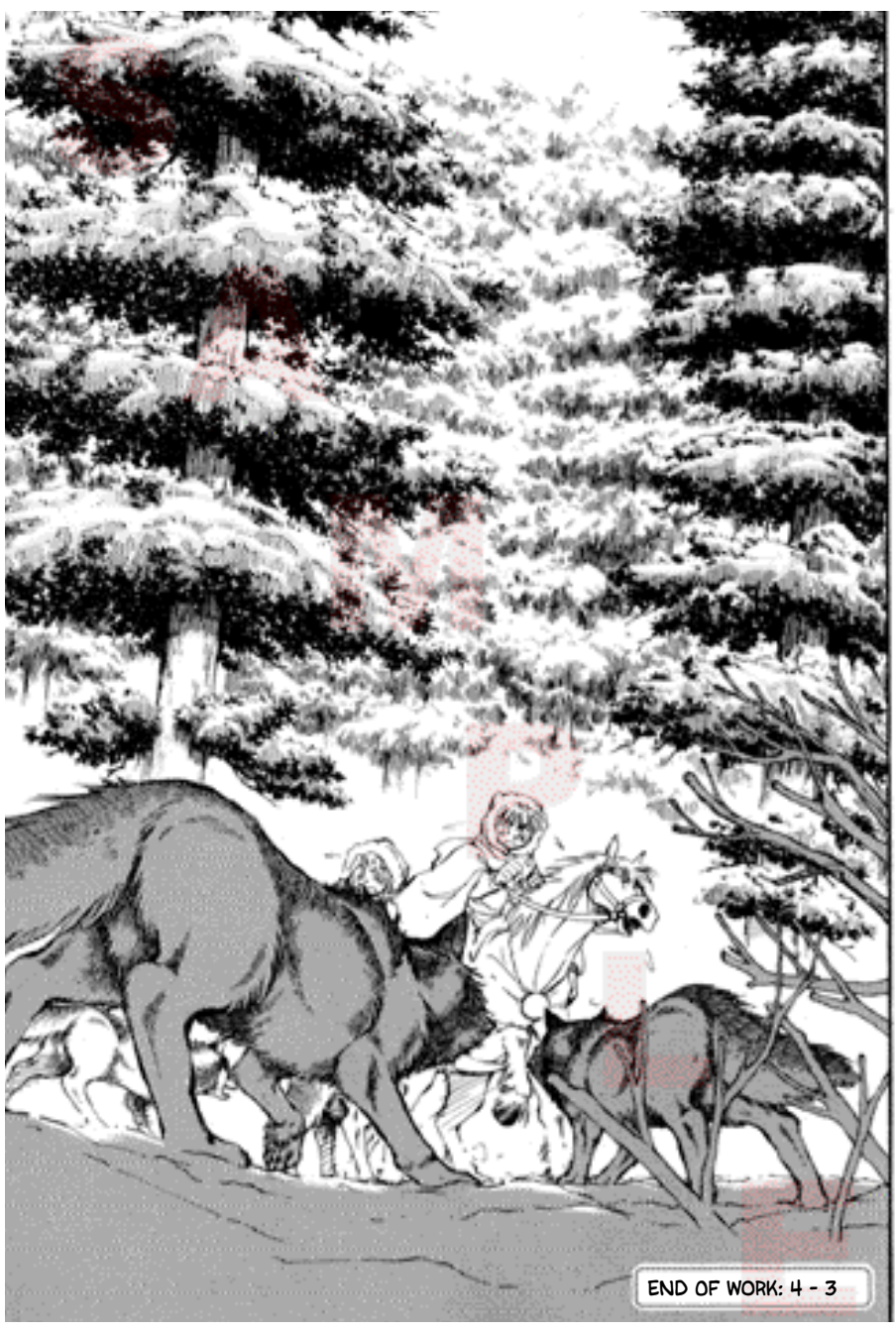

GULP

IS THIS THE HERD WE BROKE UP?
FWIP
DID YOU SEE?!
THE HORNS OF THOSE REIN-DEERS?
THEY WERE BLOOD-STAINED.

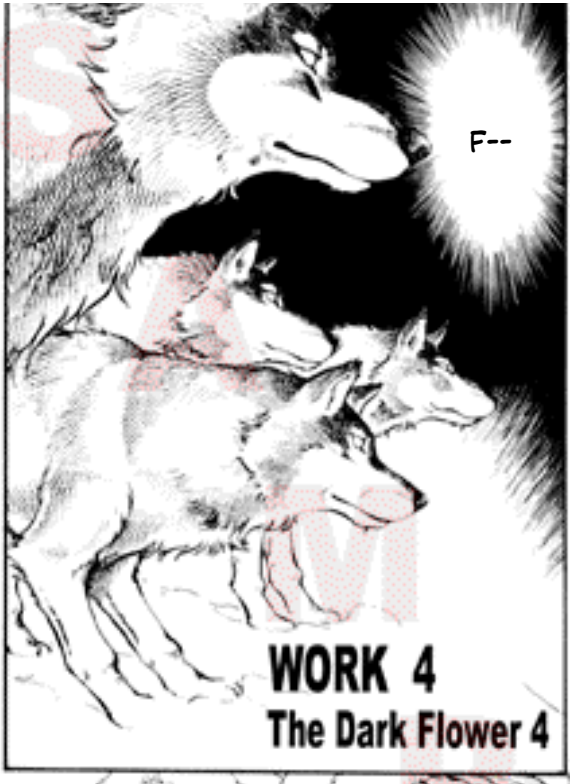
WHAT'RE YOU THINKING, SARAI?
GO BACK TO THE VILLAGE?!
WE HAVE NO TIME TO STICK OUR NOSE INTO UNNECES-SARY STUFF!
WE'RE ALREADY LATE, ANYWAY.
I HAVE TO SEE IT THROUGH ----
I GOTTA ---
REALLY BAD FEELING ---.
SARAI!!

THOSE REINDEER ARE NOT NORMAL!!
UNFORTUNATE ACCIDENTS ARE HAPPENING.
I'M SURE SHE DOESN'T KNOW THE TRUTH!!
GALLOP
GALLOP
GALLOP
SO WHAT?! YOU'RE GONNA BE DEMOTED TO THE FARM
YOU, IDIOT!!
SHE SHOULDN'T BE THERE!!

Gasp
NEEEEIGH
TURN BACK.
IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS ANYMORE!!
WHA--
WHAT DID YOU SAY?!


END OF WORK: 4 - 3

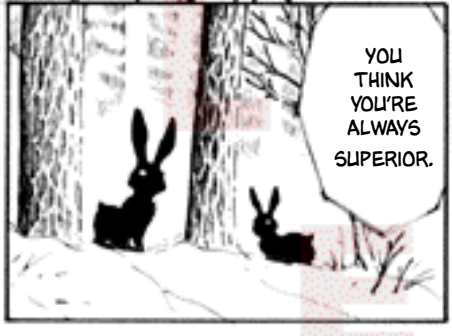
YOUR WORK IS DONE.
FORGET ABOUT THE VILLAGE AND LEAVE!!
TH--
THIS WOLF TALKS TOO?!
IT'S WHAT IS CALLED TELEPATHY.
!!
I'M SENDING A DIRECT MESSAGE INTO YOUR BRAINS.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH---
--WOLVES AROUND HERE?
NOT JUST NEWTON?!
GO!!
THIS IS A SPECIAL PARDON.
DID CAPINO ORDER YOU?
--TO LET US GO?

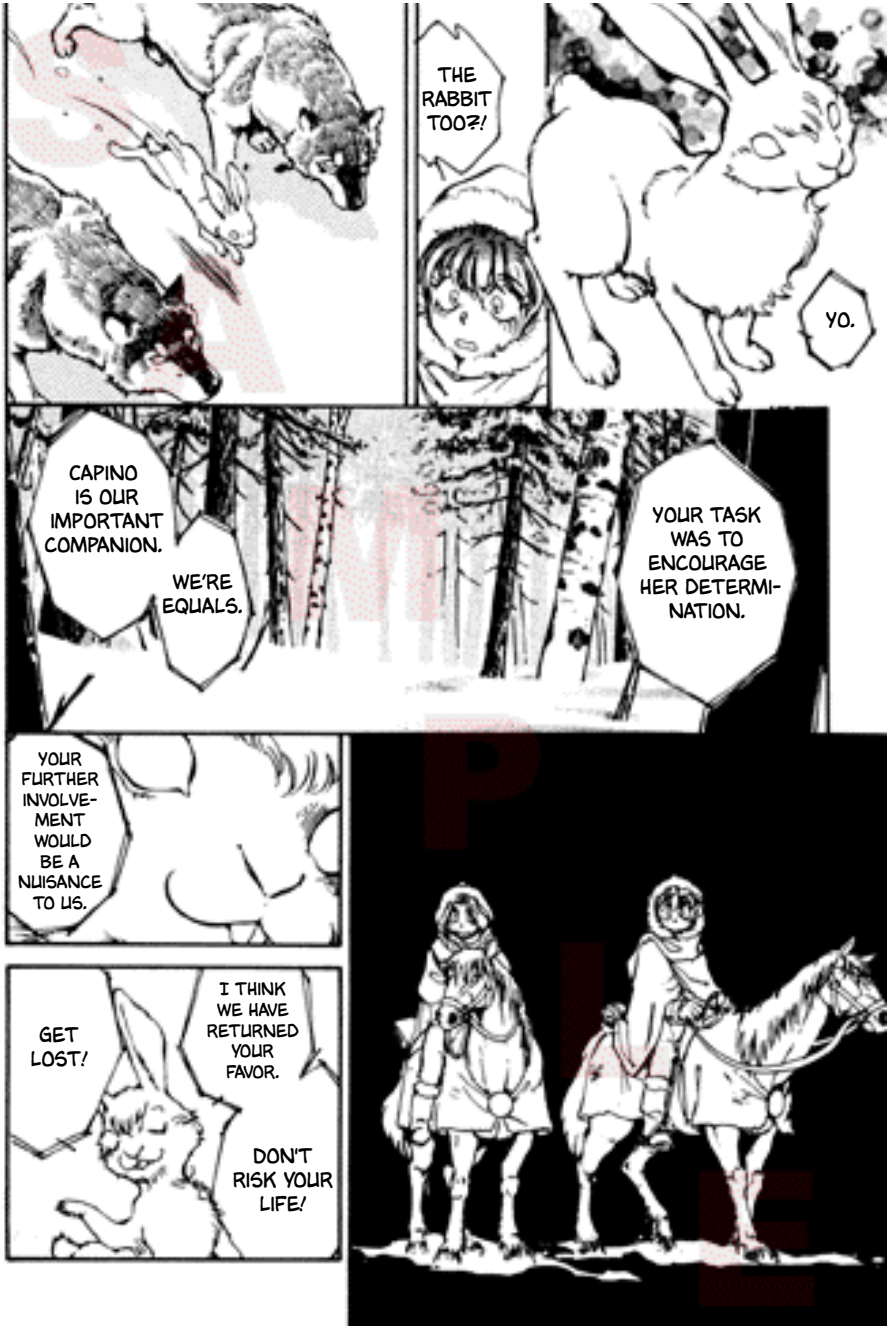

F--
WORK 4
The Dark Flower 4

ff--

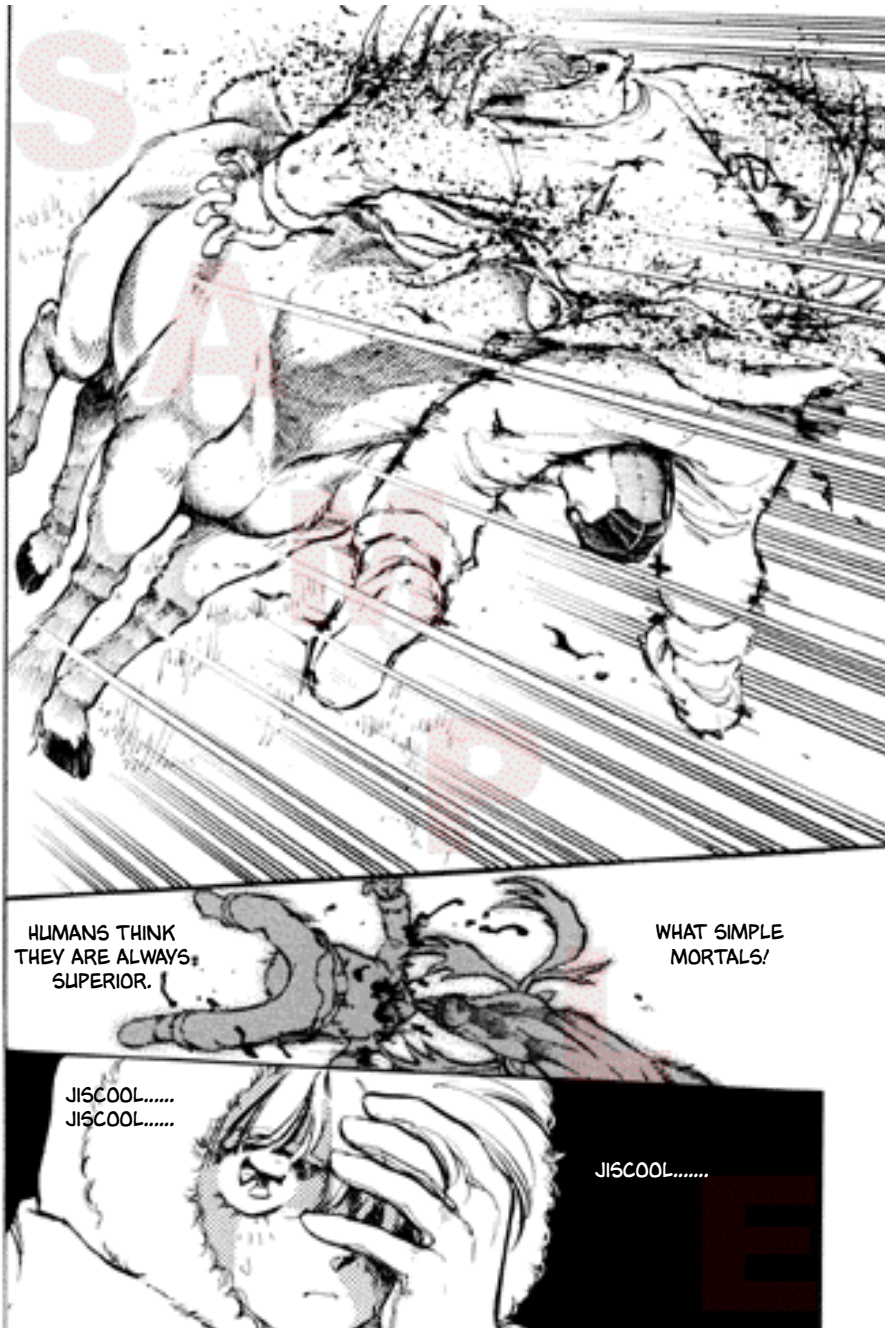
Hahahaha!
Fhahahaha
Fhahaha

HUMANS ARE SUCH SIMPLE CREATURES.


YOU THINK YOU'RE ALWAYS SUPERIOR.


THE RABBIT TOO?!
YO.
CAPINO IS OUR IMPORTANT COMPANION.
WE'RE EQUALS.
YOUR TASK WAS TO ENCOURAGE HER DETERMINATION.
YOUR FURTHER INVOLVEMENT WOULD BE A NUISANCE TO US.
GET LOST!
I THINK WE HAVE RETURNED YOUR FAVOR.
DON'T RISK YOUR LIFE!

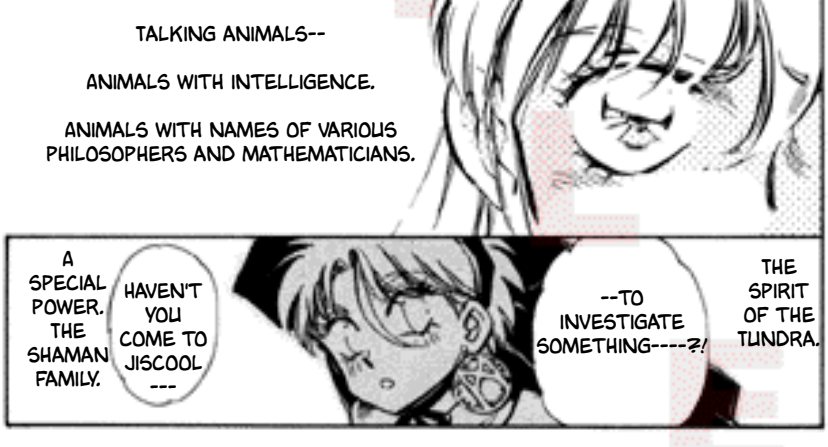
AW, FORGT THIS!!
LET'S GO, SARA!!
FOR CRYING OUR LOUD!
WHAT IS THIS-- ALICE IN WONDER-LAND?
THREATENED BY A RABBIT!
IF OUR INTELLIGENCE LEVEL IS THE SAME, WHO IS MORE SUPERIOR----
-- HUMANS OR US?
WE HAVE MANY ABILITIES THAT ARE MORE SUPERIOR TO HUMANS.
IF THE SAME LEVEL OF INTELLI-GENCE IS ADDED ----


HUMANS THINK THEY ARE ALWAYS SUPERIOR.
WHAT SIMPLE MORTALS!
JISCOOL.....
JISCOOL.....
JISCOOL.....

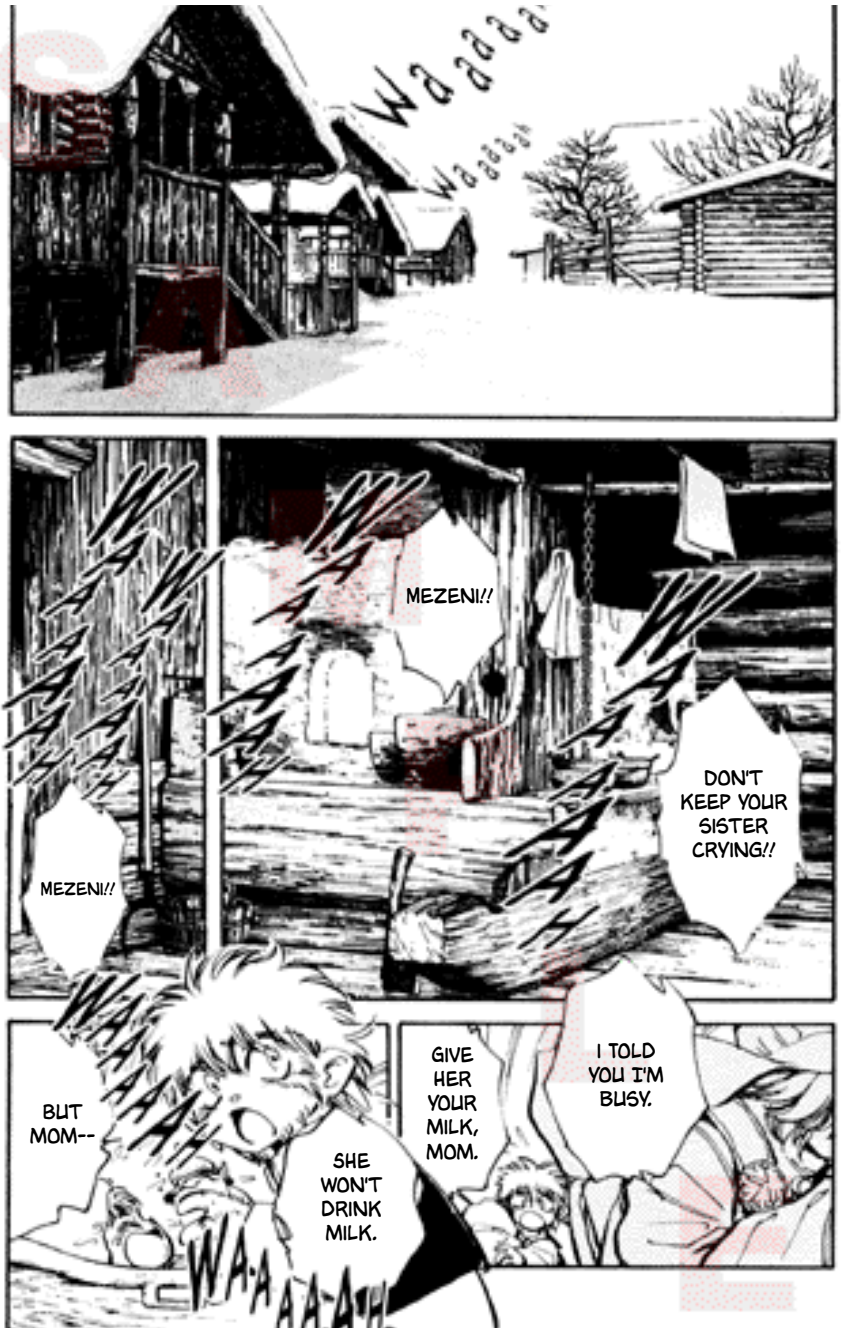
TALKING ANIMALS--

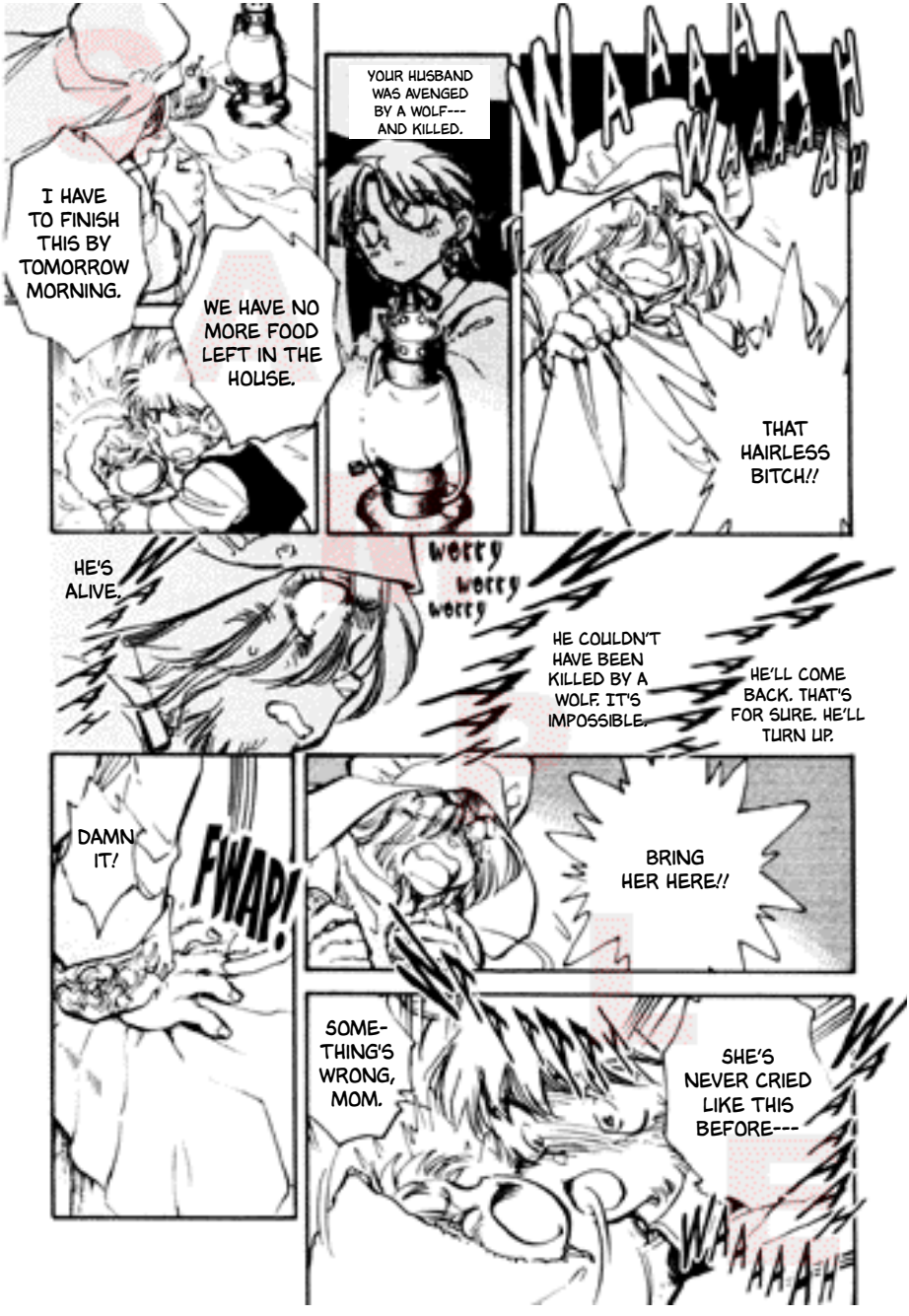
ANIMALS WITH INTELLIGENCE.

ANIMALS WITH NAMES OF VARIOUS PHILOSOPHERS AND MATHEMATICIANS.

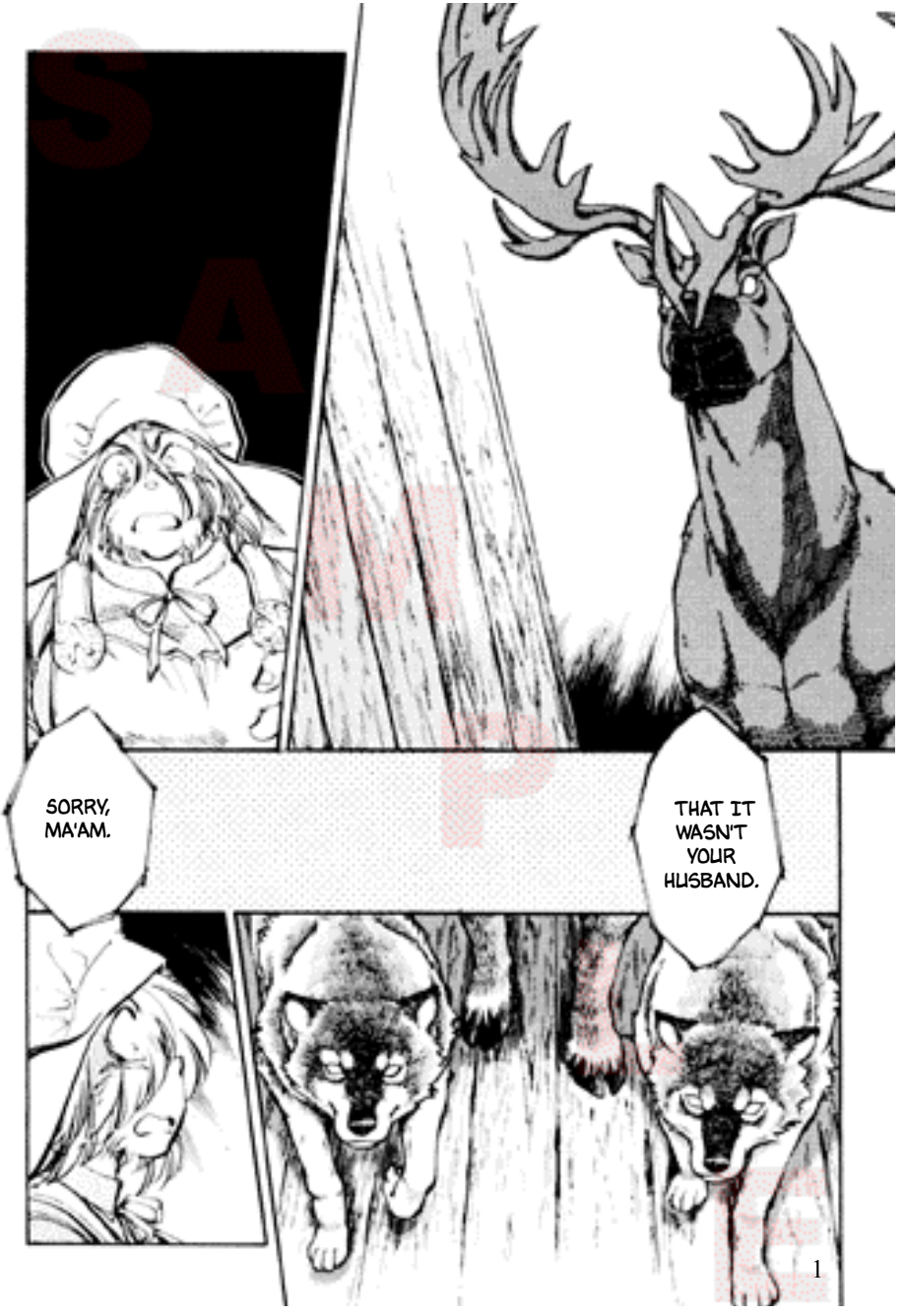


WHAT THE HELL IS THIS?
THEY CAME BACK TOGETHER/, LOOK.
I'LL BE DAMNED. THEY CAME BACK BY THEMSELVES.
I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
THIS'S NEVER HAPPENED BEFORE.


Waaaa
Waaaah
MEZENI!!
DON'T KEEP YOUR SISTER CRYING!!
MEZENI!!
I TOLD YOU I'M BUSY.
GIVE HER YOUR MILK, MOM.
BUT MOM--
SHE WON'T DRINK MILK.
WA-A A A-AH


I HAVE TO FINISH THIS BY TOMORROW MORNING.
WE HAVE NO MORE FOOD LEFT IN THE HOUSE.
YOUR HUSBAND WAS AVENGED BY A WOLF--- AND KILLED.
WAAAAAAAAH
THAT HAIRLESS BITCH!!
HE'S ALIVE.
worry worry worry
HE COULDN'T HAVE BEEN KILLED BY A WOLF. IT'S IMPOSSIBLE.
HE'LL COME BACK. THAT'S FOR SURE. HE'LL TURN UP.
DAMN IT!
FWAP!
BRING HER HERE!!
SOME-THING'S WRONG, MOM.
SHE'S NEVER CRIED LIKE THIS BEFORE---
WAAAAAH

SQUIRM
SQUIRM
SQUIRM
LOOKS LIKE
WHY ARE YOU SO ACTING UP?
WAAAAAH
SHE'S SCARED OF SOMETHING.
KNOCK
KNOCK
OPEN UP, LEGA.
IT'S ME.
I'M HOME.
WAAAAAH
DEAR!!


SORRY, MA'AM.
THAT IT WASN'T YOUR HUSBAND.

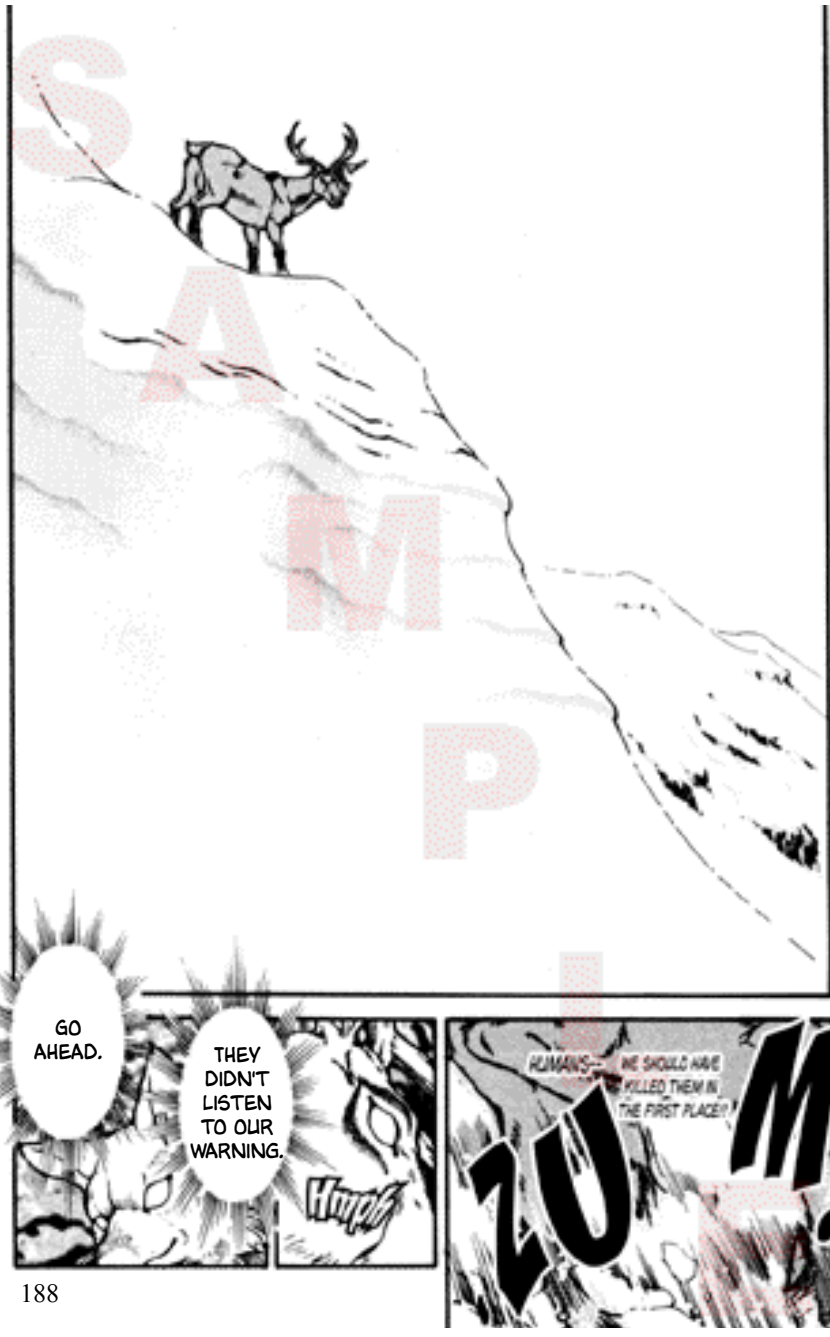
EE
YEE
EEEK
WAA
WAAAAAA
WHAT NOISY FOOD!
NIDA!!
MEZENI!!
ZU
M!

IT'S BEGUN---
NOW, NOBODY CAN STOP IT--- NOBODY---
BAM BAM BAM
CAPINO!!
CAPINO!!
WAKE UP!!
WAKE UP!!
CREAK

THIS IS IT---!!

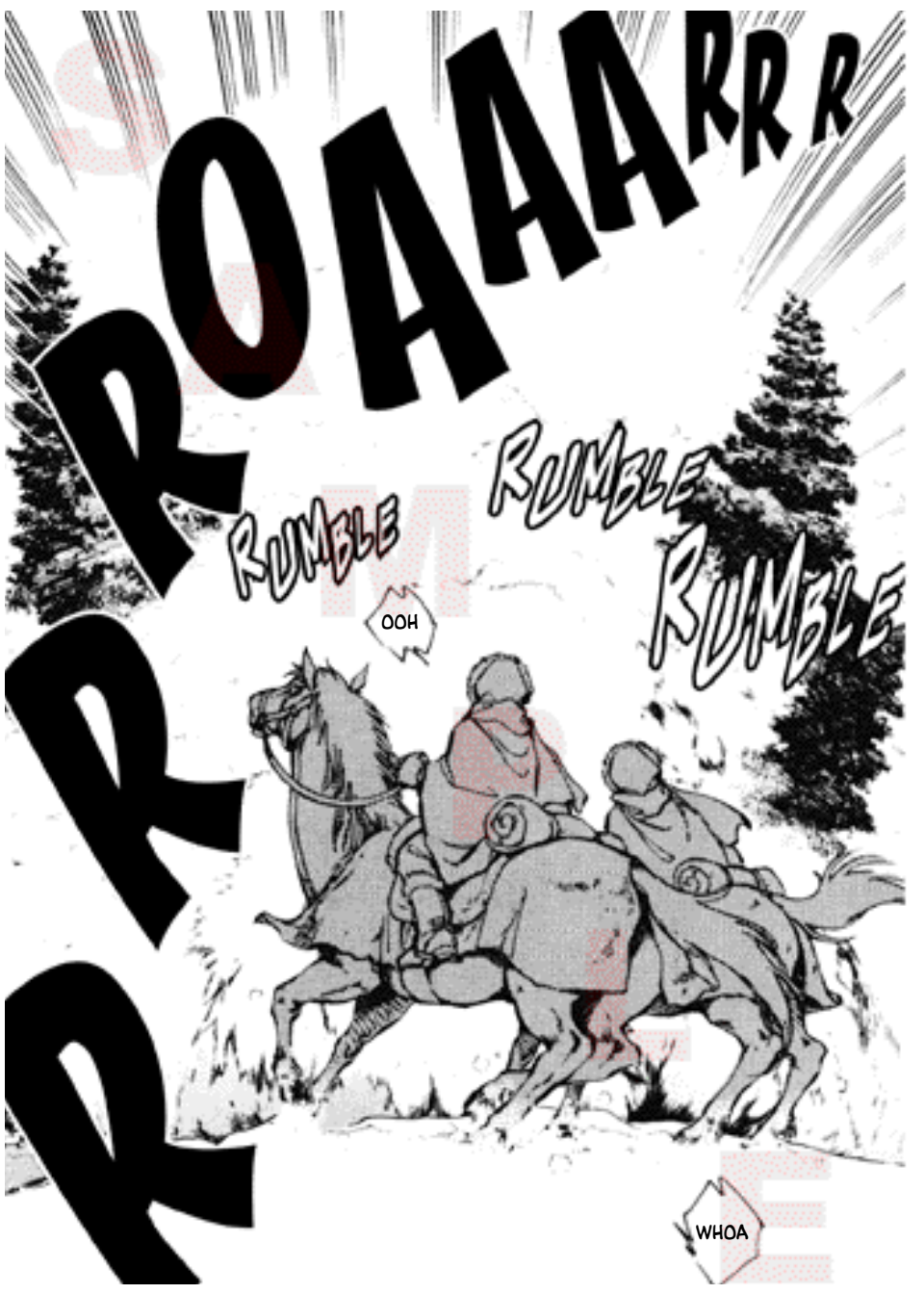
I'LL WRITE THIS IN THE REPORT!!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE, BUT IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH OUR JOB!

EVEN IF WE HARRY UP AND PASS THE MOUN-TAINS,
I WONDER IF THE CLIENT IS REALLY WAITING FOR US---
IT WAS STRANGE TO ME THAT THE MOTHER SHIP RETURNED THERE.
IT COULD ALMOST PASS THE MOUNTAINS.
THE DISORDER OF THE LANDING SHIP WAS STRANGE TOO.
GALLOP GALLOP
ARE YOU SAYING THEY DISGUISED THE WHOLE THING AS AN ACCIDENT AND SENT US HERE TO CHECK?
THEY COULD HAVE SAID IT'S AN INVESTIGA-TION, IF IT'S SO!
IT'S NOT A FOOL'S ERRAND.
IF YOU'RE DEALING WITH TELEPATHICS, YOU CAN'T FOOL THEM.
THIS REGION WAS RECONIZED AS A NOMAN'S LAND.
HEAD-QUAR-TERS
--MAY HAVE HAD SOME IDEA ABOUT WHO MADE THAT.


GO AHEAD.
THEY DIDN'T LISTEN TO OUR WARNING.
Hmph
HUMANS— WE SHOULD HAVE KILLED THEM IN THE FIRST PLACE!
ZUM!

SAMPLE

RRROAARR
HUH?!
RRROAARR
RUMBLE
RUMBLE

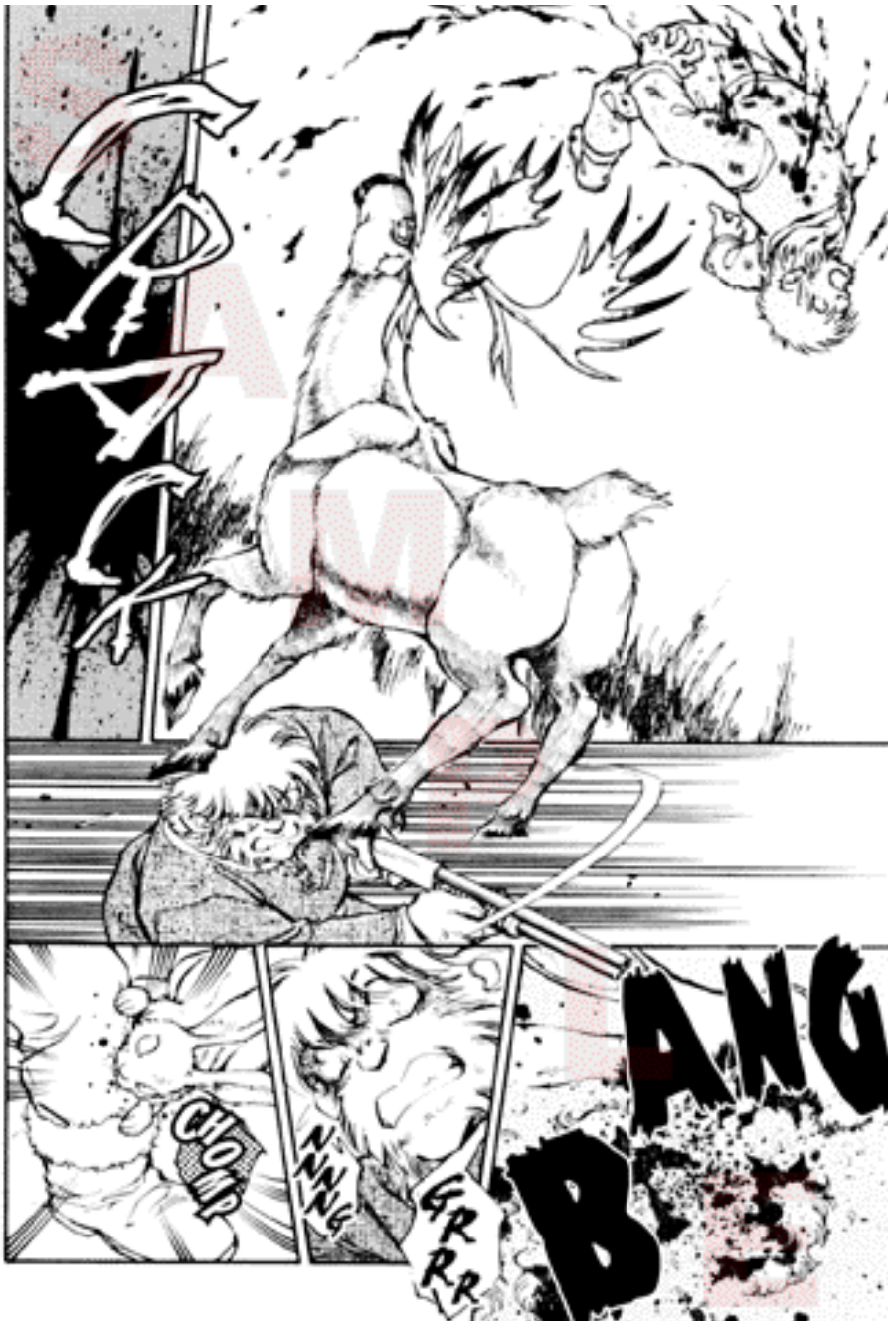

RRROAAARRR
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
OOH
WHOA

SLAM
AAAAAAH!
RROAAAAR

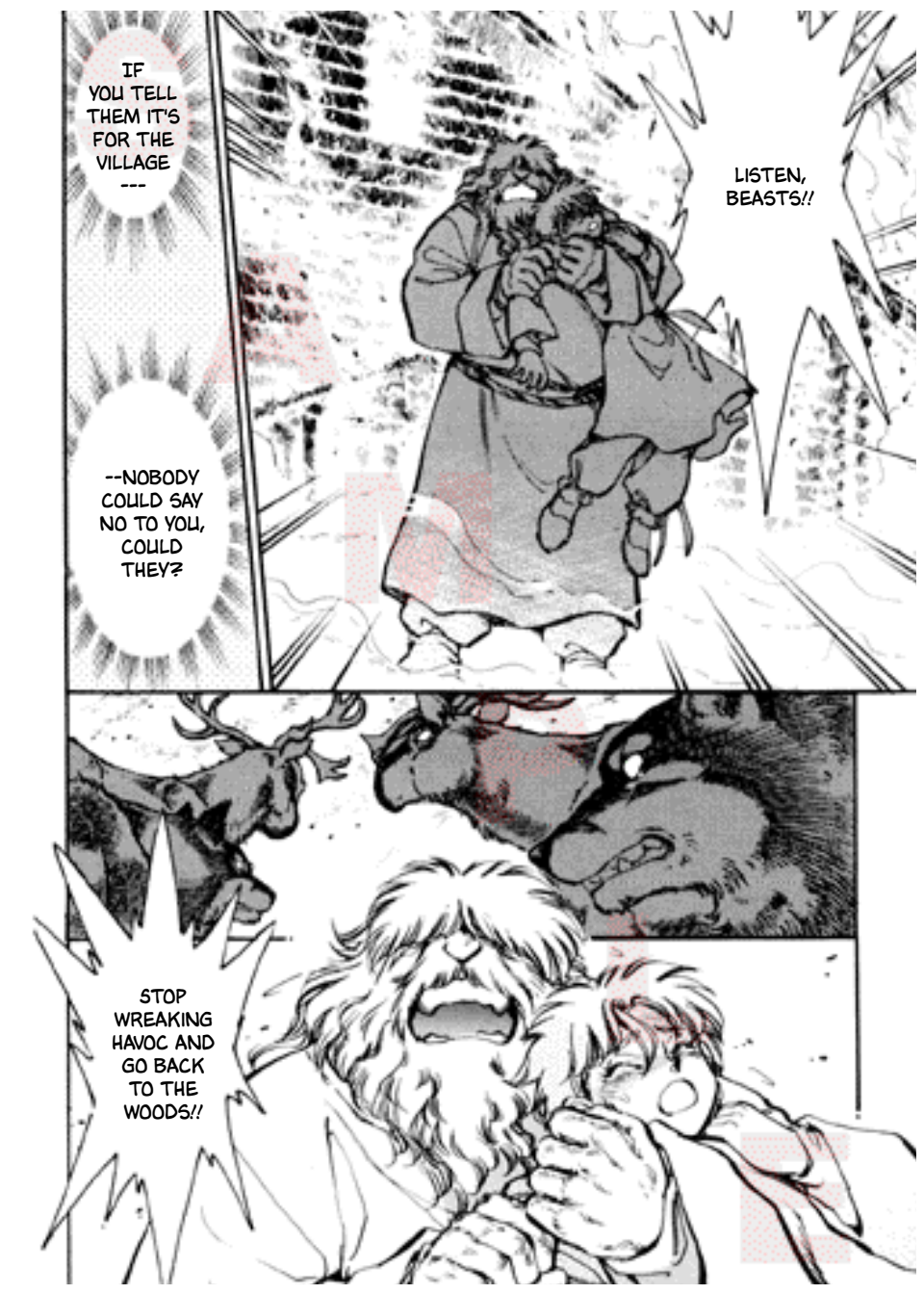
END OF WORK: 4 - 4

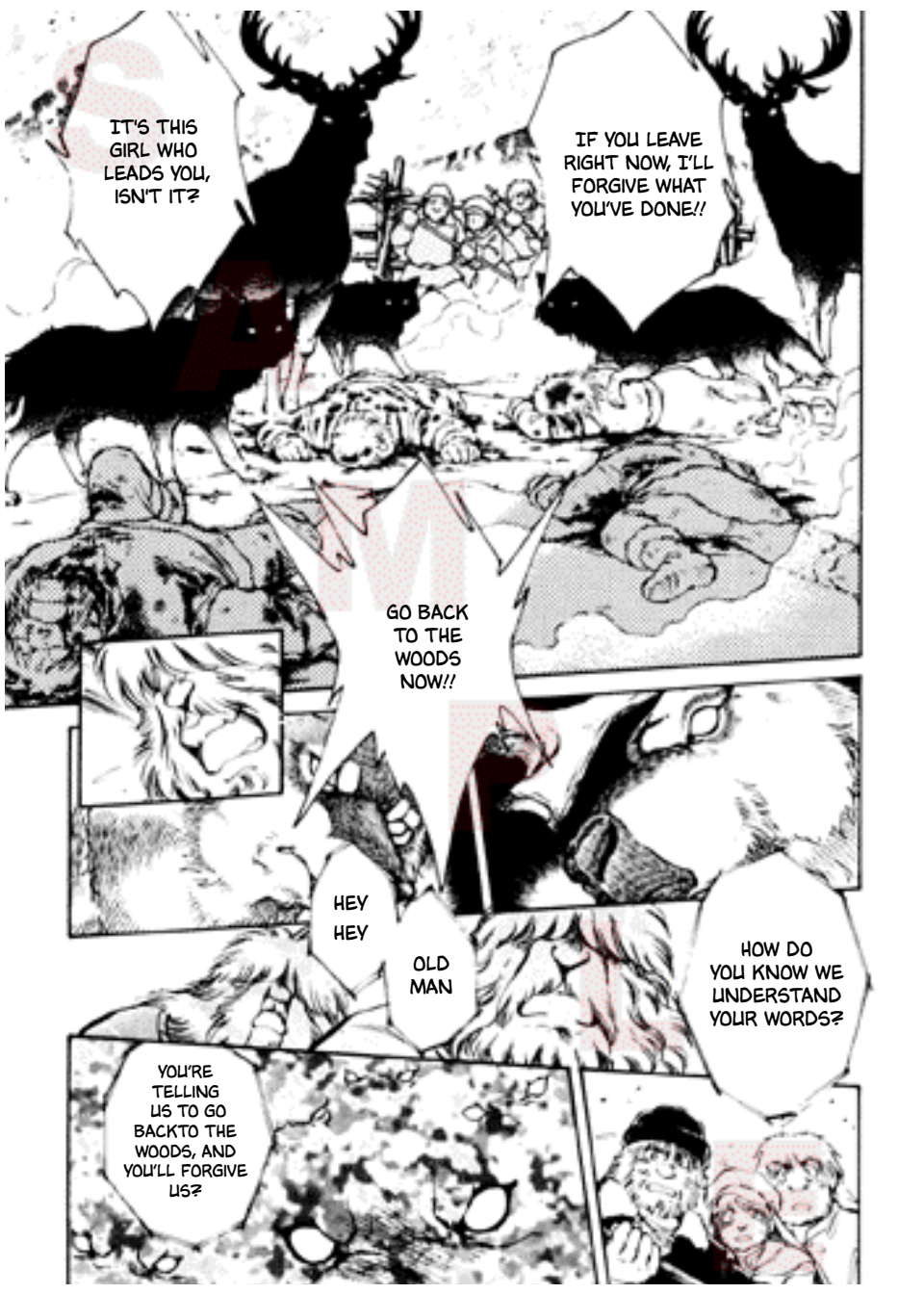
WORK 4
The Dark Flower 5

CAPINO!!
WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY ANY-THING?!
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL US?!
CAPINO!
YOU--
KNEW THE STRANGE ACTIVITIES OF THE ANIMALS, DIDN'T YOU?!

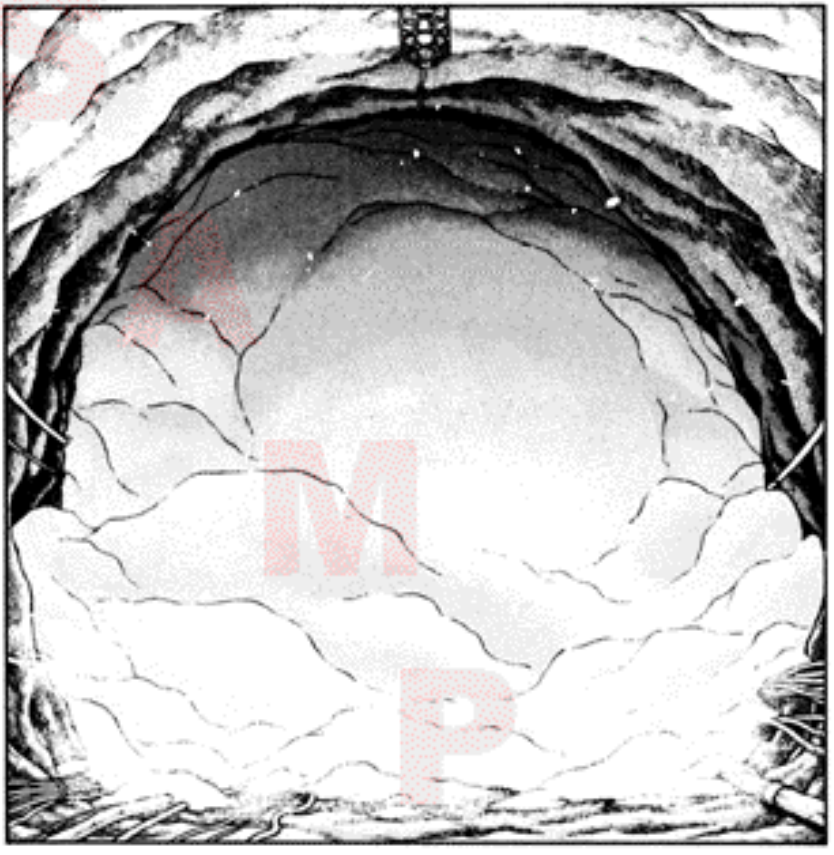

CHOMP
NNNG
GRRR
BANG

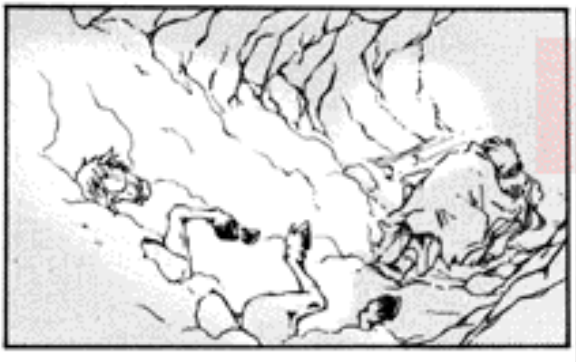
WHY DID YOU TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ONLY ME?
WHY, MR. ELDER?
KRASH BOM!
THERE WERE MANY OTHER--
--CUTE ATTRACTIVE GIRLS.


IF YOU TELL THEM IT'S FOR THE VILLAGE ---
--NOBODY COULD SAY NO TO YOU, COULD THEY?
LISTEN, BEASTS!!
STOP WREAKING HAVOC AND GO BACK TO THE WOODS!!


IT'S THIS GIRL WHO LEADS YOU, ISN'T IT?
IF YOU LEAVE RIGHT NOW, I'LL FORGIVE WHAT YOU'VE DONE!!
GO BACK TO THE WOODS NOW!!
HEY HEY
OLD MAN
HOW DO YOU KNOW WE UNDERSTAND YOUR WORDS?
YOU'RE TELLING US TO GO BACKTO THE WOODS, AND YOU'LL FORGIVE US?

WE'VE COME HERE TO---
EXTER-MINATE YOU ALL.
ROAR
DON'T YOU CARE ABOUT YOUR LEADER?!
HEH.
YOU DOUBLE-CROSSERS!
CUT THE CRAP.
WH...
WHAT'S HE TALKING ABOUT?!
WHA--
YOU WERE CREATURES OF OUR SIDE UNTIL NOT TOO LONG AGO.
AS SOON AS YOU TURNED INTO HUMANS, YOU STARTED TALKING BIG.





PAPA--
I'M COLD, PAPA ...
SO COLD ...
WHERE AM I...?!
WHY IS IT SO COLD PAPA...?
WHY CAN'T I MOVE?

AAAAAH!

FLICKER?!

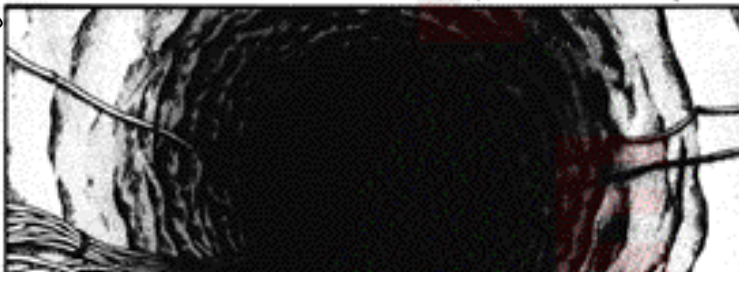
YOU WERE CRYING "PAPA, PAPA" LIKE A BABY.
EMBARRASSING. YOU'RE A BATTLE MAID.
WHERE ARE WE?

LOOKS LIKE A MAN-MADE PATHWAY.

THROB
THROB
THROB

IF WE DIDN'T FALL INTO THIS HOLE, WE'D HAVE BEEN DEAD.

UNDERGROUND PATHWAY.....


UNDERGROUND PATHS THAT STRETCH AROUND, CONNECTING THE FACILITIES UNDER THE TUNDRA-----

SARAI

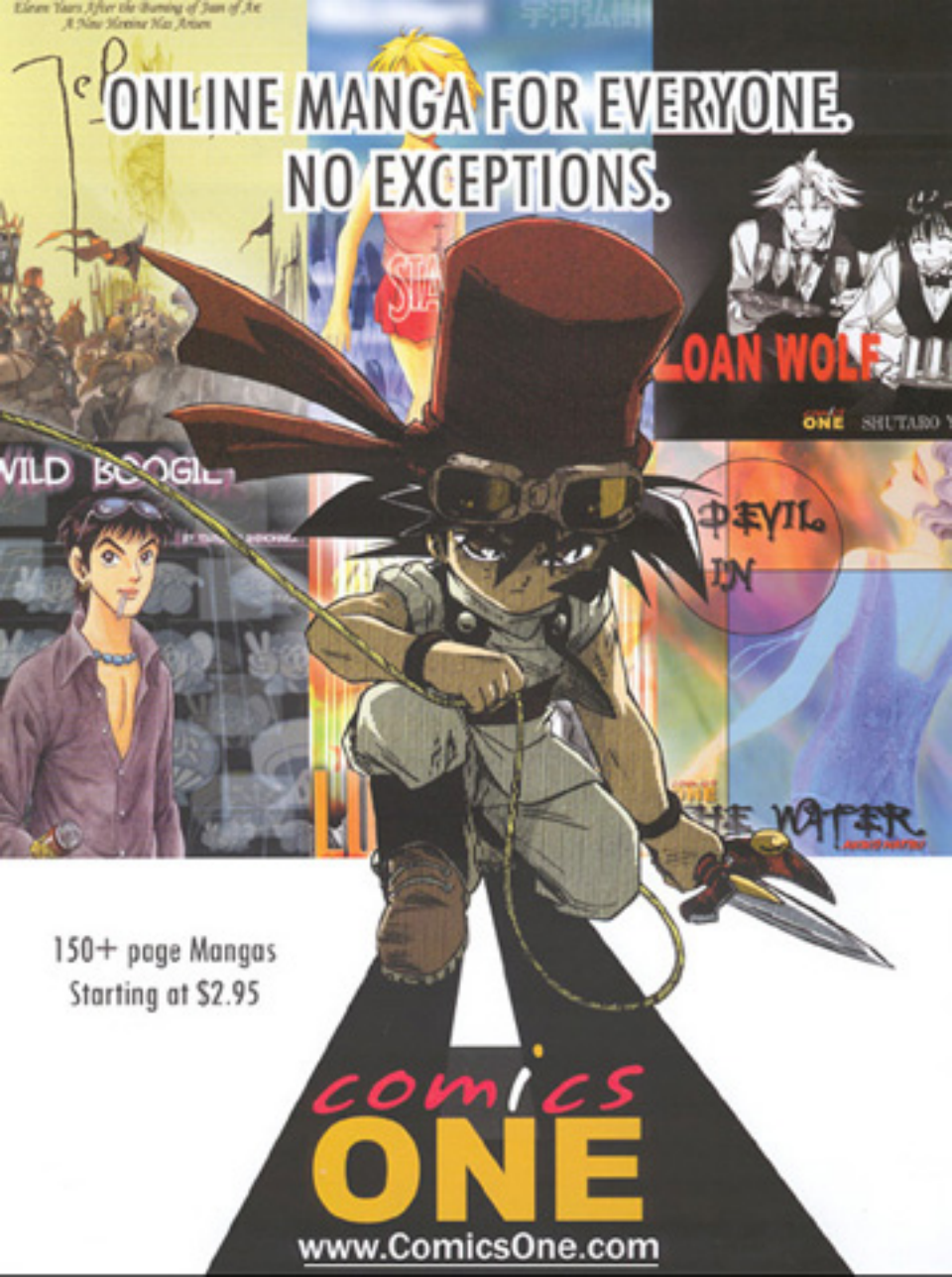
DO YOU KNOW
THIS PLACE?!
KI MMIN N
AAAAAAA
SARAI?!
END OF WORK: 4 - 5

END OF SARAI VOL. 3

TO BE CONTINUED IN

SARAI VOL. 4

SAMPLE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